Bernard Le Bovier de Fontenelle

THE HISTORY OF ORACLES AND THE CHEATS OF THE Pagan Priests.

In Two Parts.

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HISTORY
OF
ORACLES
AND THE
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OF THE
Pagan Priests.
In Two Parts.

TO THE

Right Honourable

GEORGE

Lord Jeffereys,

Baron of *Wem*, Lord High *Chancellor* of *England*.

MY LORD,

THo' Your Quality and the Awfulness of your High Station, might very well prevent the Ambition of an Author from making Addresses

of this nature, to your Lordſhip, yet I confeſs my ſelf leſs diſcouraged by the grandeur of your *Titles*, than I am by that of your *Wit*; 'tis that alone that brings me trembling to your Feet with this little Tribute of my Duty. Methought when all the honeſt part of the World was full of your Praiſe, when all that profeſs Loyalty were Celebrating your never dying Name, I ſhou'd have lookt upon my ſelf as unworthy of the Honour I now aſpire to, if I amongſt the number, ſhou'd not with all imaginable gratitude pay my acknowledgments for the good you have rendred the publick, as well as for the Services you have rendred the Crown; which you have

more

more effectually done, / with more noble Bravery, Fortitude and Resignation, than any other great States-man; you have so absolutely attach'd your self to the interest of your Monarch, that 'tis evident you are as intirely his own, as if after him you had no more business with the World, or even Life it self; and to this Glory you have arriv'd by such difficulties as no other Parts, Wit, or Courage could have conquer'd, and by it have carried your great Fame even above Envy.

Nor can the unthinking and most malicious of your Enemies reproach your Lordship with self-interest in any of your Services, since all the World knows, when they were thought Cri-

minal, nay even Punishable, (for such miserable times we have seen) when 'twas enough to have forfeited your Fortune, and almost your Life, then, I say, there was found in your Lordship, that undaunted Bravery, that Spirit and fire of Loyalty, that true concern for the Royal Cause, that you were the first destin'd Victim for the slaughter, the first to be Sacrific'd to the *Association* Rage, even when you had nothing left you but Honour, Justice and Innocence for your Guard. And as it may be truly affirm'd that the greatness of your Resolution gave the most considerable assistance to the turn of those Rabble-ruling times, and the reestablishing them in their

right

right and regular motion, it must be also confess'd that the same unchangeable resolution has continued them still (under God and our Gracious Sovereign) in the same tranquillity we now behold them; and we, who have reap'd the advantages of so good a conduct, have now no more to do but to express our sense of it in our several degrees; the People by their Prayers, and the *Poets* by their Panegyricks. Such I would gladly offer in Immortal Songs; but oh! the Muses have all taken Wing, and are fled to Climates more encouraging and kind, and have scarcely left behind them one Son inspir'd; so that instead of Nobler numbers, they are ne-

cessitated servilely to creep after the sence of foreign Authors, stinting the Generous fancy to anothers thought.

Of this nature, my Lord, is this small Piece which I most humbly Dedicate to your Lordship. 'Tis a Discourse of *Religion*, in a time when we have scarce any other Theme; 'tis grown so general a Mode, that even the Sword-men are now fiercer disputants than heretofore the Idzier Gown-men were, while every Spark of noise enough, (sometimes the best of the Argument) shews his Wit and Learning on that subject. But since the stream runs that way, I believ'd it as ridiculous to appear in good company dresst like Mrs. *Abigail*, as (at this time)

time) not to be arguing some points of Religion, tho never so *Mal à propo*. But least, by such an undertaking I should, as many do, but the more embaras the Mysteries of it, we shall treat here only of the *Pagan Religion*, and of the abominable Cheats of the *Oracles* and their *Priests*.

My Author, who is of the *French* Nation, has here given us a collection of many diverting and useful remarks on the Ancient *Religion* of the *Pagans*, and a very good account of those *Oracles* that once made so great a noise in the World; and which, I believe, will not be unpleasant to the Readers. But if in the result, it have but the Honour of being approv'd by your Lordship I shall, be very

happy

happy in the occasion it gives me of begging leave to subscribe my self,

My Lord,

Your Lordship's

most humble and

most obedient Servant,

THE PREFACE TO THE *History of Oracles.*

NOt *long since there fell into my Hands a small Book written in* Latin, de Oraculis Ethnicorum, *or of the* Heathen Oracles, *composed by Mr.* Van-Dale *Doctor of Physick, and printed in* Holland, *in which I found that the Author has strenuously refuted the commonly received Opinion,* that the ancient *Oracles* were delivered by *Dæmons,* and that they ceased wholly at the coming of *Jesus Christ. The whole Work appeared to me to be full of Knowledge in Antiquity and profound Learning: Which gave me a great Curiosity to translate it, that the Ladies and those Gentlemen, who do not much care to read*

Latin,

Latin, *might not be deprived of ſo agreeable and uſeful a Diſcourſe. But I reflected, that a Tranſlation of this Book (though excellent in its Original) would not be ſo good if too cloſely turned into* French: *For Mr.* Van-dale *wrote only for the* Learned, *and had Reaſon to neglect thoſe Ornaments and Softneſſes, which* they *do not eſteem; he cites a great Number of Paſſages very faithfully, and his Verſions are wonderful exact when he tranſlates from the* Greek; *he enters alſo into a diſcuſſion of many Points of Criticiſm, which, though they are not always neceſſary, yet they are always curious; and this he does, to gratifie the Learned, who care little for flouriſhing Reflections, Diſcourſes of Morality, or pleaſant Wit.*

Beſides, Mr. Van-Dale *makes no difficulty very often to interrupt the Thread of his Diſcourſe, and to introduce other things which preſent themſelves: And from one Digreſſion he ſometimes paſſes to another, and ſo perhaps to a third. And herein he does not amiſs, ſince thoſe for whom he writes,*

are fitted for the Fatigue of Reading, and this Learned Diſorder does not at all embaraſs or perplex them. But thoſe, for whom I deſign this Tranſlation, would have been very ill accommodated, if I had taken this Method: The Ladies, and the Major Part of the Men of this Country, are indeed more pleaſed with the Graces and Turns of Expreſſion and Thought than with the moſt exact Enquiries and profoundeſt Arguments: And being very fond of eaſe, they deſire to read Books written in a facile Method, that they may be the leſs obliged to a troubleſome Attention. For this Reaſon, I laid-by the thoughts of tranſlating, and thought it would be better, preſerving the Foundation and principal Matter of the Work, to give it altogether another Form. And I confeſs, that no Man can extend this Liberty farther than I have done; for I have changed the whole Diſpoſition of the Book, and have retrenched whatever appeared to me, either of too little Profit in it ſelf, or of too little Pleaſure to make amends for that little Profit. I have

not

not only added all the Ornaments I could think of, but many things which prove or clear up what is in Queſtion upon the ſame Subject and the ſame Paſſages, which Mr. Van-Dale *furniſhed me withal. I argue ſometimes in a manner contrary to his, and I have not been ſcrupulous to inſert many Reaſons wholly my own: In fine, I have new caſt and modelled the whole Work, and have put it into the ſame Order as I ſhould have done at firſt (to have pleaſed my particular view) had I had ſo much Knowledge as Mr.* Van-Dale; *but, ſince I am far from it, I have borrowed his Learning, and ventured to make uſe of my own Wit and Fancy (ſuch as it is,) to adorn it. Nor ſhould I have fail'd to have purſued his Method, had I had to do with the ſame Perſons as he had. And if it ſhall happen that this comes to his Knowledge, I beſeech him to pardon the Liberty I have taken, ſince it will ſerve to ſhow the Excellency of his Book: For certainly what belongs to him will ſtill appear extremely fine, tho' it have paſſed through my Hands.*

I have lately learned two things, which have Relation to this Book. The first out of the Trails called Nouvelles, *&c. or* News from the Common-wealth of Letters, *which is, that Mr.* Mæbius, *chief of the Professors of Divinity at* Leipsick *has undertaken to confute Mr.* Van-Dale. *He acknowledges indeed, that* Oracles *did not cease at the Coming of* Jesus Christ, *(which will be indisputable when we shall have examined that Question;) but he will by no means yield, that* Dæmons *were not the Authors of* Oracles. *So that he himself makes a very considerable Invasion on the common Opinion, in allowing* Oracles *to extend themselves beyond the time of the coming of* Christ; *and it will be a great Argument that they were not delivered by* Dæmons, *but by the Cheats of the Priests, if the Son of God did not silence them. 'Tis certain, that according to the usual Acceptation of these two Notions, what destroys the one extremely shakes the other, or rather quite ruins it: And this perhaps, after the reading of this Book, will be readily acknowledged to be so. But*

* *For the Month of* June. 1686.

But what is more remarkable, is, that I found in the same Book, that one of Mr. Mæbius's *strongest Reasons against Mr.* Van-Dale, *was, that* God *forbad the* Israelites *to consult Wizards and the Spirits of* Python, *whence he concludes that* Python, *that is to say the* Dæmons, *managed the* Oracles, *and that it was by their Aid that the Ghost of* Samuel *was made to appear. Mr.* Van-Dale *may answer what he pleases, but for my part, I declare, that under the Name of* Oracles, *I do not pretend to comprehend* Magick: *In which it is not to be disputed but that* Dæmons *are concerned; nor is it comprehended in what we commonly understand by the word* [Oracle] *not even according to the Sence of the ancient* Heathens, *who on one side regarded* Oracles *with Respect, as a part of their Religion, and on the other Hand had a Horror for* Magick, *as well as we. To go and consult a* Necromancer, *or some Witch of* Thessaly, *like* Ericto *in* Lucan, *was not called, going to an* Oracle; *and if we mark it, this distinction is true, even according to the common Opinion, which affirms that* Oracles

ceased

ceaſed at the coming of Chriſt, *and yet no Man can pretend that Magick then ceaſed. So that the Objection of Mr.* Mæbius *makes nothing againſt me, if he take the word* [Oracle] *in its ordinary and natural Signification, as well ancient as modern.*

The ſecond thing I have to ſpeak of is, that I am advertiſed that the Reverend Father Thomaſin, *a Prieſt of the Oratory, famous for ſo many excellent Books, wherein he has joined ſolid Piety to Profound Learning, has taken from this Book the Honour of firſt broaching this Paradox, by treating* Oracles *as meer Knavery (in his Book talled,* The Method of Study, and of teaching the Poets to Chriſtian Children.) *I confeſs I was a little troubled at this, but I pacified my ſelf with reading the twenty firſt Chapter of the eleventh Book of this* Method, *where I found nothing relating to my Opinion, ſave only that in the nineteenth Article, there are a very few words to the following Sence:* The true Reaſon (ſays he) why Silence was impoſed on *Oracles*, was, becauſe by the Invo-

cation of the Divine Word, truth has enlightned the World, and spread a broad abundance of Light far different from what was before, by which Men are emancipated from the Illusions of *Augurs* and *Astrologers*, the Observations of the Entrails of Beasts, and the greatest part of *Oracles*: Which were indeed but Impostures, whereby Men deceived one another with obscure Words that bore a double Sence: In fine, if there were *Oracles*, in which the Devil spoke, the coming of the *Incarnate Truth* condemned the Father of Lyes to an eternal Silence. 'Tis however very certain that *Dæmons* were consulted, whenever Men had Recourse to *Inchantments* and *Magick*, as *Lucan* reports of *Pompey* the younger, and as the Scripture assures us concerning *Saul*. *I agree that in such a great Treatise, which mentions* Oracles *but by the by (and that without any Design of searching into the depth of the matter) it is enough to attribute the most part of* Oracles *to the Contrivances and Deceits of Men, and to make a Question whether there*

were

were any of them at all in which Dæmons *were concerned, and to allow the* Dæmons *no further Imployment than comes within the Compass of Incantations and Magick; and in fine to prove that* Oracles *ceas'd, not because the Son of God imposed Silence on 'em, all of a sudden; but because the most enlightned Wits were disabused by the Publication of the Gospel: Which still supposes that those humane Artifices could not be detected in a little time. However in my Opinion a Question decided in so few Words ought to be treated of a-new, and that in all its natural Extent, without any Mans being offended by the Repetition; for 'tis putting in great, what the World has hitherto seen but only in little; and so in little, that its Objects are scarce perceptible.*

I know not whether it be permitted me to enlarge my Preface, by making a short Observation upon the Stile I shall use, which is familiar, and after the manner of conversing: And I Imagine that I entertain my Reader so much the more pleasingly, because I must, as

it

it were, dispute with him: And the matter which I have in Hand, being often capable enough of being turned into Ridicule, engaged me in a Manner of Writing far different from that of Sublime; since I am of Opinion that none ought to write loftily, but he that writes in Defence of himself, it is so little natural. I confess, that the low Stile is yet something worse, but there is a Medium of a very great Latitude; yet 'tis mighty hard to take that Pitch which is necessary, and to keep steady to it.

THE

THE HISTORY OF ORACLES.

MY design is not to give you directly an History of *Oracles*; I only intend to argue against that common Opinion which attributes 'em to *Dæmons*, and will have 'em to cease at the coming of *Jesus Christ*. In doing this 'tis necessary that I run through the whole History of *Oracles*, that I unfold their Originals, their Progress, the different Manners in which they were deliver'd; and lastly their Decay, with the same exactness as if I were in these matters pursuing the Natural and Historical Order.

It is not at all ſurprizing, th
Philoſophers ſhou'd have ſo muc
trouble in finding out the ſecrets o
Nature, her Principles being ſo hidde
that 'tis raſhneſs in Men to think t
diſcover 'em. But when we have n
more to do, but to enquire whethe
the *Oracles* were a Trick and Artifi
of the heathen Prieſts, or not, and a
what time they ceas'd, Where lies th
difficulty? Cannot we that are im
poſed on every day, imagine how fa
other Men may have been deceive
or deceived? But eſpecially when th
whole matter turns upon the tim
when *Oracles* ceaſed, Where can th
difficulty be? There are many Book
that treat of *Oracles*; let us ſee there
fore in what time or in what Age th
laſt *Oracles*, of which we have any
knowledge, were deliver'd.

Men are not willing to ſuffer th
deciſion of things to be too eaſie,
and therefore they mingle their own
prejudices with truths, and ſo creat
greater perplexities than are Natu
rally found therein; and thoſe ſcru
ples, which our ſelves frame, give u
th

the most pain to untangle. And in my opinion this busines of *Oracles* hath no considerable difficulty in it, but what we our selves have raised. It is in it's own Nature, a matter of Religion amongst the *Pagans*, and become so without any necessity amongst Christians, and on both sides it is loaded with prejudices which obscure the cleareſt truths.

I confess that prejudices are not in themselves common to a true as well as a false Religion; for they Reign chiefly in the false, which is only the contrivance of *humane Wit*; but in the true (which is the production of *God* alone,) there wou'd none be ever found if *humane Wit* cou'd be prevented from Intermedling and mixing something of its own with it; for all its new inventions are but prejudices without ground, and it is not able to add any thing real or solid to the great work of God. Nevertheless these prejudices that are in the true Religion are, as I may say, so closely interwoven with it, that they have drawn that respect to themselves which is

only due to the *true Religion*; and we dare not find fault with the one for fear of attacking at the same time something that is holy in the Other. I do not reproach this excess of Religion in those that are capable of discerning, but rather praise it; yet whatever Commendations they may deserve, we cannot but confess that a just *medium* is much the safest course; and that it is more reasonable to remove error from truth, than to venerate error because it is mix'd with truth. Christianity has been always able to stand of its self without false proofs; but it is at present rendred more so than ever, by the pains the great Men of this Age have taken to Establish it on true foundations with greater Power and force than ever the Ancients did; and we ought to be fill'd with so just a confidence of our Religion as to reject all false advantages, tho they may be useful to a weaker party. Having laid this foundation I advance boldly to prove that *Oracles*, of what nature soever, were not deliver'd by *Dæmons*,

and

and that they did not ceaſe at the coming of *Jeſus Chriſt*. Each of which points deſerves a particular diſcourſe.

THE FIRST DISCOURSE.

That Oracles were not given by Dæmons.

IT is certain that there are *Dæmons*, evil *Genii*, and Spirits condemn'd to eternal Puniſhment. Religion teaches us that; and if ſo, then our reaſon muſt tell us that theſe *Dæmons* might have animated Statues, and delivered *Oracles*, if God had permitted them ſo to do. We are therefore only to inquire whether they had ſuch a permiſſion or not.

'Tis only then a matter of fact which is in diſpute; and this matter of fact depending wholly on the will of God, it is certain that it would have been revealed to us, if the

knowledge thereof were neceſſary. But the Holy Scriptures do not teach us any where that *Oracles* were deliver'd by *Dæmons*; and therefore we are at liberty to chooſe which ſide we will take in this matter; for it is of the number of thoſe things that the Divine Wiſdom has thought fit to leave to our own deciſion.

Now it is agreed on by the whole World, that there was ſomething ſupernatural in *Oracles*; the reaſon of which is eaſily found, as to what regards the preſent Age: For ſince it was believ'd in the firſt Ages of Chriſtianity that *Oracles* were deliver'd by *Dæmons*, this ſeems a ſufficient cauſe for us to believe it now; for whatever was the opinion of the Ancients, good or bad, it was alwaies favourably received; and what they themſelves cou'd not prove by ſufficient Reaſons, is in our days prov'd by their Authority alone. If they foreſaw this, they did very well not to give themſelves the trouble of reaſoning too nicely. But let us inquire after the reaſons which obliged the

Primi-

Primitive Christians to believe that *Oracles* had something supernatural in 'em, and we shall afterwards try whether they were sound and solid, or not.

CHAP. I.

The first Reason why the Primitive Christians believed that Oracles *were delivered by* Dæmons, *and the surprizing Histories that were publish'd concerning* Oracles *and* Genii.

ANtiquity is full of abundance of wonderful Histories and *Oracles*, which, as it is believ'd, must needs be attributed to spirits: I will relate some few examples, which shall serve for a taste of what the rest were.

All the World knows what happen'd to the Pilot *Thamus*: His Ship being one evening near certain Islands in the *Ægean* Sea, the Winds were

huſh'd on a ſuddain, and the Waves ceas'd their motion: all the Paſſengers were awake, and the greateſt part of 'em paſſing their time in drinking one with another, when on a ſuddain they heard a Voice which came from the Iſlands, and call'd aloud, *Thamus. Thamus* ſuffer'd himſelf to be call'd thrice before he return'd an anſwer, and then the Voice commanded him, that when he did arrive at a certain place, he ſhould cry out, *That the great* Pan *was dead.* There was not a Man in the Ship who was not ſeiz'd with fear and dread at theſe words, and they all conſulted whether *Thamus* ought to obey the Voice or not; but *Thamus* reſolv'd that if when they were arrived at the appointed Place, there were Wind enough to Sail onwards, he would paſs by without ſaying any thing; but if a Calm happen'd to keep him there, he then would acquit himſelf of the order he had receiv'd. And ſo finding himſelf to be ſurpriz'd with a Calm in that very place, he cry'd out with all his force, *That the Great* Pan *was dead.*

dead. Scarce had he given over ſpeaking, but they heard from every ſide Groans and Complaints as of a great multitude ſurpriz'd and Afflicted at this news. All thoſe who were in the Ship were witneſſes of this Accident; the Fame of which ſpread it ſelf in a little time, as far as *Rome*; and the Emperor *Tiberius* having a deſire to ſee *Thamus* himſelf, aſſembled a great number of *Pagan Prieſts* to know of them who this great *Pan* was, and it was concluded that he was the Son of *Mercury* and *Penelope*. Thus in *Plutarch*'s Dialogues (where he treats of the Ceſſation of *Oracles*) *Cleombrotus* tells this ſtory, and ſays he had it of *Epitherſis* his Grammar-Maſter, who was in the Ship with *Thamus* when this wonder happen'd.

Thulis was a King of *Egypt*, whoſe Empire extended it ſelf as far as the Ocean: It is he who (as they ſaid) gave the Name of *Thule* to the Iſle now called *Iſeland*. His Empire reaching thither was of a large extent, and the King puff'd up with Pride at his *Suidas.*

his Success and Prosperity went to the *Oracle* of *Serapis*, and thus he spake to it: *Thou that art the God of Fire, and who governest the Course of the Heavens, tell me the Truth: Was there ever, or will there ever be one so Puissant as my self?*

The Oracle *answered him thus.*

First God, then the Word and Spirit, all——uniting in one, whose Power can never end. Go hence immediately, O Mortal, whose Life is always uncertain. And *Thulis* at his going thence had his Throat cut.

Eusebius has collected from the Writings of *Porphyrius* these following *Oracles*.

1. *Groan ye* Tripodes, Apollo *leaves you; he is forced to leave you by a Celestial Light.* Jupiter *has been, is, and ever will be: Oh great* Jupiter! *Alas! My famous* Oracles *are no more.*

2. *The Voice can return no more to the Priestess, she is condemn'd to Silence.*

lence. *Make such Sacrifices to* Apollo, *as are worthy of a God.*

3. *Unhappy Priest,* (said *Apollo* to one of his Priests,) *Interrogate me no more concerning the Holy Father, his only Son, nor the Spirit which is the Soul of all things: It is this Spirit that chases me for ever from these Abodes.*

Augustus now grown old, and designing to choose a Successor, went to consult the *Oracle* of *Delphos*. The *Oracle* returned no Answer, although *Augustus* spared no Sacrifice; but in the End he drew from it this following: *Suidas, Nicephorus, Cedrenus.*

The Hebrew *Infant, to whom all the Gods pay Obedience, chases me hence and sends me into Hell. Therefore quit this Temple without speaking any more.*

It is easie to see that upon the Credit of such like Histories they ground their Opinion, who say, that *Dæmons* employed themselves in pronouncing *Oracles*. This great *Pan* (who died in the Reign of *Tiberius*, as well as *Jesus Christ*) is the Master and

and Prince of the *Dæmons*, whose Empire was ruined by the Death of a God so saving to the Universe: Or, if this Explanation do not please you, (for I hope we may without Impiety give different Solutions of the same thing, although it be of a religious concern) this great *Pan* was *Jesus Christ* himself: Whose Death caused so general a Grief and Consternation among the *Dæmons*, who from that time could no more exercise their Tyranny over Mankind: Thus a way has been found out to give a double account who this great *Pan* was.

Could the *Oracle* delivered to King *Thulis* (an *Oracle* so positive concerning the Holy Trinity) be a humane Fiction? How could the Priest of *Serapis* have divined so great a Mystery, unknown then to all the World, and even to the *Jews* themselves?

If these *Oracles* were delivered by Priests, who were Impostors, what could oblige them to discredit themselves, and publish the Cessation of their own gainful *Oracles*? Is it not visible,

visible, that God forced *Dæmons* to bear Witness to the Truth? Besides, why did the *Oracles* cease; if they were only deliver'd by Priests?

CHAP. II.

The Second Reason why the Primitive Christians believed that Oracles *were supernatural, and the Agreement of this Opinion with the System of Christianity.*

THAT there are *Dæmons* being once allowed by Christianity, it was natural and easie enough to attribute to them the Ability of performing any thing that is Great and Wonderful, and not to refuse them the Power of delivering *Oracles*, and effecting any other *Pagan* Miracles, which seemed to have need of their Assistance. And thus the Ancients saved themselves the trouble of entring

tring into a ſtrict enquiry about Matters which would be tedious and difficult: For all that was ſurprizing and extraordinary, was without any more ado aſcribed to theſe *Dæmons*: And this alone they thought a ſufficient Confirmation of their Exiſtence, and of the Religion it ſelf that warranted it.

Moreover, it is certain, that about the time of the Birth of *Jeſus Chriſt*, there is often mention made of the Ceſſation of *Oracles* even in Prophane Authors. Now, why this time rather than any other, was deſtined for the Ceſſation of them is very eaſily made out, according to the Syſtem of the Chriſtian Religion. God had choſen his People out of the *Jewiſh* Nation, and left the Empire of the reſt of the World to *Dæmons* till the coming of his Son; but then, he deprived them of that Power, which before he permitted them to have: His Will then was, that all ſhould ſubmit themſelves to *Jeſus Chriſt*; and that nothing ſhould

hinder

hinder the Establishment of his Kingdom over all the World. There is such a sort of Happiness in this Thought, that I do not wonder it has made so great a Progress. This is one of those things to the truth of which we so easily accord, and which perswaded us, because we are willing to believe.

CHAP. III.

The Third Reason of the Primitive Christians, taken from the Agreement of their Opinion with the Philosophy *of* Plato.

NEver any *Philosophy* was so *a la-mode*, as that of *Plato* during the First Ages of the Church: The *Pagans* interested themselves amongst all the different Sects of *Philosophers*, but the Conformity which *Plato*'s was found to have with Religion, made almost all the knowing Christians

Christians of that Sect. Thence came the mighty Esteem they had of *Plato*: They looked upon him as a sort of Prophet who had fore-told many important Points of Christianity, especially that of the Holy Trinity, (which we cannot deny to be clearly enough contained in his Writings:) Nay, they went so far as to take his Works for Comments on the Scripture; and to conceive the Nature of the *Word*, as he conceived it. He represented *God* so elevated above his *Creatures*, that he did not believe that they were immediately made by his Hands; and therefore he put between them and him this *Word*, as a degree by which the Actions of God might pass down to *them*: The Christians had the like Idea of *Jesus Christ*: And this may perhaps be the Reason why no Heresie has been more generally received and maintained with greater heat than *Arrianism*.

This *Platonism* then (which seems to Honour the Christian Religion by countenancing it) was very full of Notions about *Dæmons*: And thence

thence they easily pass'd into that Opinion which the old Christians had of *Oracles*.

Plato said, that *Dæmons* were of a middle Nature, between God and Man; that they were the aerial *Genii* appointed to hold a Commerce, between *God* and us; that altho they were near us, yet we cou'd not see them; that they penetrated into all our Thoughts; that they had a Love for the *Good*, and a Hatred for the *Bad*; and that it was for their Honour that such variety of Sacrifices, and so many different Ceremonies were appointed: But it does not at all appear, that *Plato* acknowledged any evil *Dæmons*, to which might be attributed the management of the Illusions of *Oracles*. *Plutarch*, notwithstanding, assures us, that *Plato* was not ignorant of them; and amongst the Platonical Philosophers, the thing is out of doubt. * *Eusebius* in his *Evangelical Preparations*, recites a great Number of Passages out of *Porphyrius*, where that *Pagan* Philosopher assures us, that evil *Dæmons* are the

* *Dialogues of the ceasing of Oracles*, Lib. 4, 5, 6.

Authors of *Enchantments*, *Philtres* and *Witch-Crafts*; that they cheat our Eyes with *Spectres*, *Fantoms*, and *Apparitions*; that lying is Eſſential to their Nature; that they raiſe in us the greateſt part of our Paſſions; and that they have an Ambition to paſs with us for *Gods*; that their aerial and ſpiritual Bodies are nouriſhed with Suffumigations, and with the Blood and Fat of Sacrifices; and that 'tis only theſe that imploy themſelves in giving *Oracles*, and to whom this Task ſo full of Fraud is aſſign'd: in ſhort at the Head of this Troop of evil *Dæmons* he places *Hecate* and *Serapis*.

Tertullian *in his Apologies.*

Jamblichus, another *Platoniſt*, has ſaid as much. And the greateſt part of theſe things being true, the Chriſtians received them all with Joy, and have added to them beſides a little of their own: As for Example, that the *Dæmons* ſtole from the Writings of the Prophets ſome Knowledge of things to come; and ſo got Honour by it in their *Oracles*.

This

This Syſtem of the ancient Chriſtians had this Advantage, that it diſcovered to the *Pagans* by their own Principles, the Original of their falſe Worſhip, and the Source of thoſe Errors which they always embraced. They were perſwaded that there was ſomething ſupernatural in their *Oracles*; and the Chriſtians, who were always diſputing againſt them, did not deſire to confute this Opinion. Thus by *Dæmons* (which both Parties believed to be concerned in the *Oracles*,) they explicated all that was ſupernatural in them. They acknowledged indeed that this ſort of ordinary Miracles were wrought in the *Pagan* Religion; but then they ruined this Advantage again, by imputing them to ſuch Authors as evil Spirits. And this way of convincing, was more ſhort and eaſie, than to contradict the Miracle it ſelf, by a long train of Enquiries and Arguments. Thus I have given you the manner how that Opinion which the firſt Ages of the Church had of the *Pagan Oracles*, was grounded, I might to the

three Reasons, which I have already brought, add a fourth of no less Authority perhaps than those: That is, That in the Supposition of *Oracles* being given by *Dæmons*, there is something miraculous: And if we consider the humor of Mankind a little, we shall find how much we are taken with any thing that is Miraculous. But I do not intend to enlarge my self on this Reflection; for those that think upon it, will easily believe me, and those that do not, will perhaps give it no credit, notwithstanding all my Arguments.

Let us now examine the several Reasons which Men have had to believe *Oracles* to be Supernatural.

CHAP. IV.

That the surprizing Histories of Oracles *ought to be suspected.*

IT is very difficult to give an Account of those Stories and *Oracles* which

which we have mentioned, without having Recourſe to *Dæmons.* But the Queſtion is, Whether they be true? Let us be aſſured of the Matter of Fact, before we trouble our ſelves with enquiring into the Cauſe. It is true, that this Method is too ſlow and dull for the greateſt part of Mankind, who run naturally to the Cauſe, and paſs over the truth of the matter of Fact; but for my part, I will not be ſo ridiculous as to find out a Cauſe for what is not.

This kind of Misfortune happened ſo pleaſantly at the end of the laſt Age, to ſome Learned *Germans*, that cannot forbear ſpeaking of it. "In the Year 1593, there was a Report that the Teeth of a Child of *Sileſia* of ſeven Years old, dropp'd out, and that one of Gold came in the Place of one of his great Teeth. *Horſtius*, a Phyſician in the Univerſity of *Helmſtad*, wrote in the Year 1595 the Hiſtory of this Tooth, and pretends that it was partly natural, and partly miraculous, and that it was ſent from God

" to this Infant, to comfort the *Chri-*
" *ſtians* who were then afflicted by
" the *Turks*. Now fanſie to your
ſelf what a Conſolationthis was, and
what this Tooth could ſignifie, either
to the *Chriſtians* or the *Turks*. In
the ſame Year (that this Tooth
might not want for Hiſtorians) one
Rolandus wrote a Book of it: Two
Years after, *Ingolſteterus*, another
Learned Man, wrote againſt the Opi-
nion of *Rolandus* concerning this gol-
den Tooth; and *Rolandus* preſently
makes a Learned Reply. Another
Great Man, named *Libavius*, col-
lected all that had been ſaid of this
Tooth, to which he added his own
Opinion. In fine there wanted no-
thing to ſo many famous Works, but
only the truth of its being a golden
Tooth. For when a Gold-Smith had
examined it, he found, that it was
only a thin Plate of Gold fixed to the
Tooth with a great deal of Art.
Thus they firſt went about to com-
pile Books, and afterwards they con-
ſulted the Gold-Smith.

Nothing is more natural than to do the ſame thing in all other caſes. And I am not ſo convinc'd of our Ignorance by the things that are, and of which the Reaſons are unknown, as by thoſe which are not, and for which we yet find out Reaſons. That is to ſay, as we want thoſe Principles that lead us to truth, ſo we have thoſe which agree exceeding well with error and falſehood.

Some Learned Phyſicians have found out the reaſon why Places under Ground are hot in the Winter and cool in the Summer; and greater Phyſicians have ſince diſcover'd that they are not ſo.

Hiſtorical Enquiries are much more liable to this error. For when we argue from what is ſaid in Hiſtory, what aſſurances have we that theſe Hiſtorians have never been byaſſed, nor credulous, nor miſinform'd, nor negligent? 'Tis neceſſary therefore that we ſhould look out for one, that has been an Eye-witneſs of all thoſe things of which he writes, unconcern'd by Intereſt, and diligent. But

eſpecially when Men write of ſuch matters of Fact, as have a Relation to Religion, it is very hard not to favour (according to the party of which they are) a falſe Religion with thoſe advantages that are not due to it; or not to give a true one thoſe falſe aſſiſtances of which it has no need: And yet we may be aſſured that we can never add more truth to what is true already, nor make that true which is falſe.

Some Chriſtians in the firſt Age, for want of having been convinced of this, Maxim have ſuffer'd themſelves, in favour of Chriſtianity, to introduce ſuppoſitions bold enough, which the ſounder part of Chriſtians have been fain afterwards to diſown. This Inconſiderate zeal has produc'd a great number of Apocryphal Books, to which were given the Names of *Pagan* or *Jewiſh* Authors; for the Church, having to do with theſe two ſorts of Enemies, what was more advantageous to her than to fight 'em with their own Weapons, by producing Books, which, tho' made,

as was pretended, by their own party were written nevertheless very much in favour of Christianity? But whilst they strained the point too far, to draw from those counterfeit works some very great benefit to their Religion, they gained none at all; for the clearness of the manner in which they were written, betray'd them; and our Mysteries are therein so plainly unfolded, that the Prophets of the Old and New Testament understood nothing in comparison of those *Jewish* and *Pagan* Authors. And which way soever Men turn themselves to save the reputation of those Books, they will find in their too great clearness a difficulty not to be surmounted. If some Christians fathered spurious Books on *Pagans* and *Jews*, *Hereticks* found the way of doing the like on the Orthodox. There was nothing to be met with but false Gospels, false Epistles of the *Apostles*, and false Histories of their Lives; and nothing but an effect of the Divine Providence could have separated the truth from so many Apocryphal Works, as confounded it. Some

Some great Men of the Church have ſometimes been deceived either by the ſpurious works of *Heretick* fathered upon the Orthodox, or by what the Chriſtians father upon the *Jews*; but oftenest by the latter: For they ſeldom examine ſtrictly enough that which ſeems favourable to Religion; the heat with which they conteſt for ſo good a Cauſe, not giving them the leiſure to make a good Choice of their Weapons. This is the reaſon that they have hapned ſometimes to make uſe of the Books of the *Sibyls* or of thoſe of *Hermes Triſmegiſtus* King of *Egypt*.

We do not intend by this to weaken the Authority, or to leſſen the Merit of thoſe great Men. For after we ſhall have examin'd all the errors, (into which perhaps they have fallen on ſome certain ſubjects,) there will yet remaine abundance of ſolid Reaſonings, and very curious diſcoveries, which are worthy of our higheſt Admiration. And if, with the true proofs of our Religion, they have left us others which may be ſuſpected, it

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is our part to receive that only which is legitimate; and to pardon their zeal, who have furnish'd us with more proofs than there was any necessity for.

I am not at all surpriz'd that this same Zeal has convinced 'em of the truth of I know not how many *Oracles*, advantageous to their Religion, which passed for currant in the first Ages of the Church. The Authors of the Books of the *Sibyls*, and those of *Hermes Trismegistus*, were also probably the Authors of these *Oracles*; at least it was more easie to feign them, than to counterfeit intire Volumes. The History of *Thamus* is Originally heathen, and yet *Eusebius* and other great Authors have given it the Reputation of being believed. It is immediately followed in *Plutarch* with a Relation so ridiculous, that it will be sufficient wholly to discredit the other. For *Demetrius* saies there, that the most part of the Islands near *England* are desert and Consecrated to *Dæmons* and *Heroes*, and that he, being sent by the Emperor to discover these Islands, chanced to land upon

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on one of those that were Peopled, and that, a little time after his Arrival, there happen'd a Tempest and terrible claps of Thunder and Lightning, which made the People of the Country conclude that some one of their Principal *Dæmons* was dead; because their Death's were alwaies attended with something strange and horrible. To this *Demetrius* adds, that one of those Islands was the Prison of *Saturn* who was kept there by *Briareus*, and was Buried in a Profound sleep (which methinks should render the custody of the Giant very needless) incompass'd with an infinite number of *Dæmons* lying at his feet as slaves.

Has not *Demetrius* made a very curious Relation of this Voyage? And is it not pleasant to see such a Philosopher as *Plutarch* coldly relate to us such Wonderful things? It is not without reason that *Herodotus* is esteemed the father of History; and all the *Greek* Writers of that kind are on that account his offspring, and partake of his *Genius*. They have somewhat of truth, but more of wonderful

ſul and amuſing ſtories. But let it be how it will, it were ſufficient almoſt to refute the Hiſtory of *Thamus* (tho it had no other defect) to have been found in the ſame Treatiſe with the *Dæmons* of *Demetrius*.

But beſides this, it cannot receive a reaſonable interpretation. For if the Great God *Pan* were a *Dæmon*, could not the *Dæmons* have ſent one another an account of one of their Deaths, without employing *Thamus* to that end? Have they no other way of informing one another of news? And, on the other ſide, can they be ſo imprudent as to diſcover to Men their Misfortunes and the weakneſs of their Natures? *God* compell'd 'em, perhaps, you will ſay. Then *God* had ſome deſign in doing ſo; But let us ſee what follow'd thereupon; there was no Perſon that was converted from *Paganiſm* by having heard of the Death of the great God *Pan*. It was declared that he was the Son of *Mercury* and *Penelope*, and that it was not he that was acknowledg'd in *Arcadia* for ſupream God of all (as his Name

Name imports;) and therefore tho' the voice had named him the great *Pan*, yet he was underſtood to be but the little *Pan*, whoſe Death was of no great conſequence, and there did not appear any conſiderable regret for it.

If this great *Pan* were *Jeſus Chriſt*, the *Dæmons* would not have told to Men news of a death ſo much to their advantage, unleſs God had compell'd 'em to it. But what's the effect of all this? did any one underſtand the Name of *Pan*, in its true ſence? *Plutarch* liv'd in the ſecond Age of the Church, and yet no Perſon then knew that *Pan* was *Jeſus Chriſt*, who died in *Judea*.

The Hiſtory of *Thulis* is related by *Suidas* (an Author who heaps up a great many things, perphaps ill enough choſen) His *Oracle* of *Serapis* is reproach'd with the ſame fault, as the Books of the *Sibyls*; that is, of being too clear concerning our Myſteries. And farther, we are certain that this *Thulis* King of *Egypt* was not one of the *Ptolomyes*; and what then

then will become of the whole *Oracle*, if *Serapis* were a God firſt brought into *Egypt* by a *Ptolomy*, who ſent for him out of *Pontus*, as many Learned Men pretend from very ſtrange probabilities? at leaſt it is certain that *Herodotus*, who has written ſo plentifully about old *Egypt*, does not mention *Serapis*, and that *Tacitus* recounts at length how and why one of the *Ptolomyes* brought from *Pontus* the God *Serapis*, that was then known no where elſe.

The *Oracle*, ſaid to be given to *Auguſtus* concerning the *Hebrew Child*, is by no means to be reciev'd. *Cedrenus* cites *Euſebius* for it; but at this day there is no ſuch thing to be found there. It is not impoſſible that *Cedrenus* ſhould make a falſe Citation, or ſhould cite ſome work not rightly attributed to *Euſebius*. He has thought fit to relate upon the credit of certain counterfeit Hiſtories of St: *Peter*, which paſs'd for currant in his time, That *Simon* the *Magician* had at his door a great *Dog*, which devour'd all thoſe that his Maſter would not

not have enter; and that St. *Peter* coming thither to ſpeak with *Simon*, commanded the Dog to go and tell his Maſter in Humane Language, That *Peter* the ſervant of God, would ſpeak with him: The *Dog* went and performed that Command, to the great Amazement of ſuch as were then with *Simon*. But *Simon*, to ſhew that he could do as much as St. *Peter*, bid the *Dog* go and tell him, *That he might Enter*: which the *Dog* immediately did. Hence you may ſee what it is that the *Greeks* call writing of Hiſtory. *Cedrenus* lived in an ignorant Age, when the liberty of writing Fables was joined with the General inclination of the *Greeks* towards 'em.

But tho' *Euſebius*, in ſome work of his, which has not come down to us, had effectually ſpoke of the *Oracle* of *Auguſtus*, yet we find *Euſebius* himſelf is ſometimes deceived; of which there are good proofs. The firſt Defenders of Chriſtianity, *Juſtin*, *Tertullian*, *Theophilus*, *Tatian*, would they have ſaid nothing of an *Oracle*

ſo

so much in Favour of their Religion? Had they so little Zeal as to neglect a thing of such Advantage? but even *those that give us this *Oracle*, spoil it by adding, that *Augustus* in his Return to *Rome*, built in the Capitol an Altar with this Inscription, *This is the Altar of the only Son (or Eldest Son) of God.* Where had he the Idea of this only Son of God, of which the *Oracle* makes no mention? In short, that which is most observable, is, that *Augustus* after the Voyage he made into *Greece*, nineteen Years before the Birth of *Jesus Christ*, never returned to *Rome*; but allowing that he did, he was not then in an Humor to erect Altars to any God but himself: For he suffered not only the *Asian* Maids to raise Altars to him, and celebrate holy Games in his Honour; but also at *Rome* they consecrated one to *Fortune Returning*, *Fortunæ reduci*, that was to say, to himself, and they were to keep the day of his happy return as a Festival.

* *Credenus, Suidas, Niceph.*

* *Tacitus, Dion Cassius.*

The *Oracles*, which *Euſebius* relates out of *Porphyrius*, appear harder to make out than all the reſt: for *Euſebius* would not have charged *Porphyrius* with *Oracles* of which he made no mention, and *Porphyrius*, who was ſo addicted to *Paganiſm*, would not have cited falſe *Oracles* (concerning the Ceſſation of *Oracles* themſelves) to the Advantage of the Chriſtian *Religion*: For in this Caſe, it ſeems, that the Teſtimony of an Enemy has a great deal of Credit and Force.

But on the other ſide, *Porphyrius* was not ſo unskilful a Man, as to furniſh the *Chriſtians* with Weapons againſt *Paganiſm*, without being neceſſarily engaged to it by the Conſequence of ſome Reaſons, which does not in this matter appear to be his Caſe. If theſe *Oracles* had been alledged by the Chriſtians, and *Porphyrius* owning that they were effectually given, had denied the Conſequences drawn from them, it is certain that they would have then been much to be relied on.

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But it is out of *Porphyrius* himself that the Christians (as it appears by the Example of *Eusebius*) pretend to fetch these *Oracles*; it seems, that *Porphyrius* takes Pleasure to ruin his own *Religion*, and to establish another. The Truth is, this is suspicious of it self, and yet it becomes more so, by his pushing the thing so far; for they tell us from him of I know not how many *Oracles* most clear and most positive, concerning the Person of *Jesus Christ*, concerning his Resurrection and Ascension. In fine, the most resolute, and knowing amongst the *Pagans* hath loaded us with Proofs of Christianity; we may well suspect so great a piece of Generosity.

Eusebius believed it a very great Advantage to be able to place *Porphyrius* at the Head of a Multitude of *Oracles* so favourable to Religion; and he gives them us stripp'd of what ever accompanies them, in the Writings of *Porphyrius!* How do we know, but that he did refute them? According to the Interest of his Cause,

he ought to have done it; and if he did not do it, certainly he had ſome hidden Intention.

It is to be ſuſpected, that *Porphyrius* was wicked enough to frame falſe *Oracles*, and preſent them to Chriſtians, with a Deſign of making Sport with their Credulity, if they ſhould receive them for true, and endeavour to ſtrengthen their Religion by ſuch like props: And then he would have drawn thence ſuch Conſequences as would be of greater Importance than theſe *Oracles*, and with this inſtance have attacked the whole Religion. However at the botom this would have been but a frivolous Argument.

'Tis very certain, that this ſame *Porphyrius* (who furniſheth us with all theſe *Oracles*) held, (as we have ſeen) that they were delivered by lying *Spirits*; it may very well then be imagined, that he hath put into *Oracles* all the Myſteries of our Religion, endeavouring to deſtroy it by rendring it ſuſpected of Forgery, as depending on the Teſtimony of falſe

falſe Witneſſes: I know the *Chriſtians* did not take it ſo; yet ſeeing they could never prove by any Argument, that the *Dæmons* were ſometimes forced to ſpeak the Truth, *Porphyrius* was always in a condition to make uſe of his *Oracles* againſt them. And therefore (if we take the Matter right) their better way had been to have denied, that there were ever any *Oracles*, as we do at this preſent. This appears to me to be a ſufficient Reaſon, why *Porphyrius* was ſo prodigal of *Oracles*, that were ſo favourable to our *Religion*. But what would have been the Succeſs of the great debate between the *Chriſtians* and *Infidels*, we can only conjecture; for all the written pieces of their Diſputes are not come to our Hands. Thus in examining things a little cloſer than ordinary, we find that the *Oracles*, which were reckoned ſuch Wonders, never were at all; of which, I ſhall not need to give any more Inſtances, all the reſt being of the ſame Nature.

CHAP. V.

That the common Opinion concerning Oracles *does not agree ſo well as 'tis imagin'd with the Chriſtian Religion.*

THE ſilence of the Scriptures concerning theſe evil *Dæmons*, (which are Pretended to be the managers of *Oracles*) hath not only left us at liberty to believe nothing of 'em, but it obliges us to believe the contrary; for can it be poſſible that the *Scriptures* ſhould not have inſtructed the *Jews* and *Chriſtians* in a thing which it ſo extremely imported them to know, (and which they cou'd never have found out by their natural Reaſon) to the end that they might not be ſhaken in their own Religion, by ſeeing things ſo ſurpriſing in another. For I conceive that God ſpake not to Man, but to ſupply the weakneſs

neſs of his underſtanding, which of it ſelf was not ſufficient to guide him; and that whatſoever he has not declar'd to him, is either of ſuch a nature that he may learn it by himſelf, or elſe God does not think it neceſſary that he ſhould know it. So if the *Oracles* had been deliver'd by evil *Dæmons*, God would have made it known to us, to have prevented us from believing that he himſelf deliver'd 'em, or that there was ſomething Divine in falſe Religions.

David reproached the *Infidels* with *Gods* that had mouths and ſpake not, and wiſhes that their Adorers, for a puniſhment, might become like thoſe they Ador'd; but if theſe *Gods* had not only the uſe of Speech, but alſo the knowledge of things to come, I ſee no reaſon *David* had thus to reproach the *Infidels*, nor ought they to have been angry for having been reſembled to their *Gods*. When the Holy Fathers inveighed with ſo much reaſon againſt the Worſhip of *Idols*, they alwaies argu'd from the impotency of 'em; but if they had

ſpoken, if they had predicted things to come, then they ought not to have treated them with ſuch contempt on the account of their impotency, but ſhou'd rather have diſabus'd the People, and have confeſs'd the wonderous Power that was in 'em: In fine, could they be ſo mightly miſtaken who ador'd what they believed was animated by a Divine vertue, or at leaſt a vertue more than humane. 'Tis true, you'll ſay, that theſe *Dæmons* were enemies of *God*, but how cou'd the *Heathens* Divine that? Becauſe *Dæmons* required ceremonies that were Barbarous and extravagant, the *Pagans* themſelves believ'd 'em fantaſtical and cruel, but nevertheleſs they believ'd 'em more powerful than Men; nor did they know that the true God offer'd 'em his protection againſt them. They did for the moſt part ſubmit themſelves to their Gods as to dreaded enemies who were to be appeaſed at any Price; nor had this ſubmiſſion and fear been quite without Reaſon, if ſo be that in effect *Dæmons* did give ſome proof of their Power

power over nature. In fine, *Paganism* (tho a Worship abominable in the ſight of God) would have been but an involuntary and excuſable error.

But you will ſay, if the crafty Prieſts made it their buſineſs to impoſe upon the People, then *Paganiſm* was no more but a ſimple error into which the credulous fell, whilſt their honeſt and downright intention was to Honour a ſuperior being.

But the caſe is much otherwiſe; for it behoves Men to precaution themſelves againſt errors, into which other Men may lead 'em; but there is no poſſibility of fore-arming themſelves againſt thoſe errors into which they may be led by *Genii*, or *Dæmons* which are above themſelves. The light of my Reaſon is ſufficient to examine whether a ſtatue ſpeaks or does not, but in the moment that it does ſpeak, nothing can perſwade me againſt the Divinity which I attribute to it. In a word, God is oblig'd by the Laws of his Bounty to protect me from thoſe ſurpriſes from which I cannot defend my ſelf; but

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as for other things, it belongs to my reason to do its office.

We see also that when God permitted the *Dæmons* to work prodigies, he at the same time confounded them by working miracles far greater. *Pharaoh* might be deceived by the *Magicians*, but *Moses* was still more powerful than the *Magicians* of *Pharaoh*. The *Dæmons* never had more power or did more surprizing things, than in the time of *Jesus Christ* and the *Apostles*. This hinders not, but that *Paganism* with justice hath been alwaies called the worship of *Dæmons*. For in the first place the *Idea* which is taken therein of the Divinity, does not at all agree with the true *God*, but with the reprobate and eternally unhappy *Genii*.

Secondly, the design of the Heathens was not so much to adore the *first Being* which is the source of all good, but those ill Beings of whose anger and caprice they stood in fear. In fine, the *Dæmons*, (who have without contradiction the power of tempting Men and laying snares for 'em)

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countenanced as much as ever they could the gross errors of the *Pagans*, and made 'em blind to impostures, which were notoriously visible. From hence it is said that *Paganism* was not born up by the Miracles, but by the Artifices of *Dæmons*; which supposes that in whatever they did there was nothing of reality or truth, nor of such force as effectually to make a *Statue* speak.

Nevertheless, it may be that God has sometimes permitted the *Dæmons* to animate *Idols*; but if this ever happen'd, God had his peculiar reasons for it, which are alwaies worthy of profound veneration; But generally speaking, there has never been any such thing. *God* permitted the *Devil* to burn the Houses of *Job*, and lay his Pastures desolate; to cause all his *Oxen* and *Sheep* to Die, to strike his Body with a thousand wounds, but it must not therefore be said that the *Devil* is let loose on all those to whom such misfortunes happen. When there is a discourse about any Mans being sick or ruin'd we never

ver think that the *Devil* is concern in it. The case of *Job* is a pa ticular case; we argue Indepe dantly of it, and our general rea ning never excludes the exceptio that the Almighty power of G can make in all things.

'Tis apparent then that the com mon opinion concerning *Oracles* does not very well agree with th bounty of God, and that it discha ges *Paganism* of the greatest Part the extravagances and Abomination which the Holy Fathers alwa found in it. The *Pagans* might ha said in their own justification, that was no wonder, that they shou'd o bey those which animated *Statue* and performed every day a thousan extraordinary things; and therefo the *Christians* to take from them excuse, ought never to have yielde 'em this Point. If all the *Pagan* Re ligion were no other than the cheat of Priests, *Christians* took advantag of the excess of ridiculousness into which the *Pagans* fell.

Besides, is there any great appe-

rance

nce that the diſputes between the *hriſtians* and *Pagans* was in that ate, ſeeing *Porphyrius* confeſſes with much willingneſs, that the *Oracles* ere delivered by evil *Dæmons*? Of heſe evil *Dæmons* he made a double ſe: He made uſe of 'em (as we ave already ſeen) to render thoſe *racles* unprofitable and diſadvanta-eous to the *Chriſtian Religion*, which he *Chriſtians* thought were on their ide; and beſides he imputed all the ollies and Barbarities of an infinite umber of ſacrifices, which without eaſing they reproach'd the *Pagans* withal, to theſe cunning and cruel *Genii*. We then attack *Porphyri-us* even in his laſt retrenchments, nd aſſert the true intereſt of *Chri-ſtianity*, by undertaking to prove that *Dæmons* were not the Au-thors of *Oracles*.

CHAP.

CHAP. VI.

That Dæmons *are not ſufficiently eſtabliſh'd by* Platoniſm.

IN the firſt Ages, *Poetry* and *Philoſophy* were the ſame thing, and all Wiſdom was contained in Verſe. Nor was Poetry more credited by this Alliance, but *Philoſophy* was leſs. *Homer* and *Heſiod* were the firſt *Grecian Philoſophers*; and thence it is that all other *Philoſophers*, have had in very great Eſtimation what ever they ſaid, and have never cited them but with great Honour.

Homer very often confounds together the Gods and *Dæmons*: But *Heſiod* diſtinguiſhes four ſpecies or kinds of reaſonable Natures, viz. the *Gods*, the *Dæmons*, the *Demy-Gods* or *Heroes*, and *Men*. Nay, he goes farther yet, and notes the Duration of the Lives of *Dæmons*: For the *Nymphs*,

of

of which he ſpeaks in the Place I am going to cite, are theſe *Dæmons*, and *Plutarch* underſtands them ſo.

A Crow, (*ſays* Heſiod) *lives nine times as long as a Man, a Stag four times as long as a Crow, a Raven three times as long as a Stag, the Phœnix nine times as long as a Raven; and in fine the Nymphs ten times as long as the Phœnix.* One would take this Calculation for no other than a mere Poetick Fancy, unworthy the Reflections of a *Philoſopher*, or the imitation of a Poet; for there is in it neither agreeableneſs nor truth: But *Plutarch* is not of this Opinion; for he finds, that ſuppoſing the Life of Man to be ſeventy Years, (which is its ordinary Duration,) the *Dæmons* then ought to live ſix hundred and eighty thouſand, and four hundred Years: And not conceiving how any Experiment of this ſo long Life of the *Dæmons* can be made, he rather believes that *Heſiod* by the *Age of Man*, underſtands but *one Year*. The Interpretation is not very natural; but according to this Eſtimation; the Life

Life of the *Dæmons* is not above nine thouſand, ſeven hundred and twenty Years, and then *Plutarch* had not much Trouble to find out how *Dæmons* could live ſo long. And beſides, he remarks in the Number of nine thouſand, ſeven hundred and twenty Years, certain *Pythagorean* Perfections, which render it altogether worthy to deſign the Term of the Lives of *Dæmons*. Such as theſe are the boaſted reaſonings of Antiquity.

From the Poems of *Homer* and *Heſiod*, the *Dæmons* paſſed into the Philoſophy of *Plato*, who can never be too much commended, ſince 'tis he of all the *Greeks*, who has conceived the higheſt *Idea* of *God*; tho even that plunged him in falſe Notions. For, becauſe *God* is infinitely elevated above *Men*, he believed that there ought to be placed between him and us, a kind of middle *Beings*, which ſhould cauſe a Communication of two Extremes ſo far diſtant, by the means of which, the Operations of the Deity might be brought down to us. *God* (ſays he) reſembles

bles a *Triangle, which has three Sides equal, the* Dæmons *are like a Triangle that has but two Sides equal, and Men are like a Triangle which has all three Sides unequal.*

This *Idea* is well enough fansied, and there is nothing wanting but something of Solidity to support it.

But after all (may it be said) has not *Plato* reasoned justly? And do not we know for certain by the *Holy Scriptures*, that there are *Genii*, Ministers of the Will of *God* and his Messengers to Men? Is it not wonderful that *Plato* should discover this, only by the Light of his natural Reason?

I confess, that *Plato* has conjectured aright; nevertheless, I blame him for his Conjecture. Divine *Revelation* assures us of the Existence of *Angels* and *Dæmons*, but it is not within the Sphere of humane Reason to assure us of it. He knows not what to make of the infinite space which is between *God* and *Man*, and therefore he fills it with *Genii* and *Dæmons*: But with what shall that infinite space

be fill'd, which is between *God* and these *Genii* or *Dæmons* themselves? For the distance between *God* and any Creature whatsoever, is infinite. And if the Actions and Will of *God* must traverse, as one may say, this Infinite *Vacuum* to go to the *Dæmons*, they may as well reach even to *Men*, since *they* are farther off but by very few degrees, which bear no Proportion to the *first great distance*. When *God* treats with Men by the Ministry of *Angels*, 'tis not to be understood that Angels are necessary for this Communication (as *Plato* pretends;) *God* emploies them for Reasons, into which *Philosophy* can never penetrate, and which can never be perfectly known but by himself.

According to that *Idea*, which the Comparison of the *Triangle* gives us, we find that *Plato* framed this Notion of *Dæmons*, to the end we might mount from one Creature, to another Creature more perfect, till at length we arriv'd at *God* himself. So that *God* would have but some degrees of Perfection more than the highest

highest Creature; but it is visible, that as they are all infinitely Imperfect in respect of *him*, because they are all infinitely distant from him; so the Differences of Perfection, which are between the Creatures, vanish as soon as they are compared with God; for what elevates them one above another does not at all bear any proportion to him.

And if we consult nothing but humane Reason, there is no need of *Spirits* to make the Actions of *God* communicable to *Men*, nor of placing between *God* and us any thing that approaches *him* nearer than we do.

And perhaps *Plato* himself was not so sure of the Existence of his *Dæmons*, as the *Platonists* have since been. That which makes me suspect this, is, That he places *Love* in the Number of the *Dæmons*, (for he often mixes Gallantry with *Philosophy*, and his Talent is not mean on subjects of that Nature.) He says, that *Love* is the Son of the *God* of *Riches*, and the Goddess of *Poverty*: from his Father he holds, his greatness of Courage, his Elevation of

thought, his Inclination to give, his Prodigality and his Confidence in his Strength, his good Opinion of his own Merit, and Desire to have always the Preference. But, on the otherside, he holds from his Mother that Indigence, which makes him always asking, that Importunity with which he asks, that Timidity and Bashfulness, which hinders him often times from daring to ask, that Disposition which he has to Servitude, and that Fear of being despised, which he can never lose. This, in my Opinion, is one of the prettiest Fables that was ever made. It is pleasant to find *Plato* sometimes writing *Amours* as soft and agreeable as *Anacreon* could himself have done. This Description of the Pedegree of Love extremely well sets forth all the fantasticalness of his Nature: But we know not what to make of *Dæmons*, if Love must pass for one.

There is no appearance that *Plato* understood this in a natural and Philosophical Sence, nor that he could say, *Love* was a Being out of us, or extrinsecal,

extrinsecal, which inhabits the Air: Certainly, he means this only as a Gallantry, and then it must be permitted me to believe, that all his *Dæmons* are of the same kind with *Love*. And that, since he mingles Fables with his System, he cares not much, if the rest of his System pass for a Fable. Hitherto we have only answered the Reasons, that made Men believe *Oracles*, to have had something in them of Supernatural. Let us now begin more closely to attack this Opinion.

CHAP. VII.

That some Grand Sects of the Pagan Philosophers, *did not believe there was any thing Supernatural in* Oracles.

IF in the midst of *Greece* it self, where all places resounded with their *Oracles*, we had maintained

that they were but Impostures, no one would have been astonished with the Boldness of the *Paradox*; and there would have been no need of taking any Measures, how to vend the Opinion in secret. For *Philosophers* were divided about the Subject of *Oracles*; the *Platonists* and *Stoicks* were for them, but the *Cynicks*, *Peripateticks* and *Epicureans* declared highly against them. The Wonders of the *Oracles* were not so great, but that half the Wise Men of *Greece*, were still at Liberty to believe nothing of them; and this, notwithstanding the common Prejudices or Bigotry of the *Grecians*: Which is a very remarkable thing!

*. Lib. 4. *of his Evang. Preparations.*

* *Eusebius*, tells us of six hundred *Heathen* Authors, who have writ against the *Oracles*: But of all these, in my Opinion, *Oenomaus*, (of whom he makes mention, and of whom he has preserved some Fragments) is one, the Loss of whose Works are to be the most lamented. There is a great deal of Pleasure to be found in those Fragments of his that remain,

main, where *Oenomaus*, full of his Cynical Liberty, argues upon every *Oracle* againſt the *God* who deliver-ed it, and draws up an Accuſation againſt him. See how he treats the *God* of *Delphos*, who in his Anſwer to *Cræſus* had pronounced theſe Words:

Crœſus, *in paſſing the River* Halis, *ſhall deſtroy a great Empire.*

Which fell out accordingly; for *Cræſus* paſſing the River *Halis* at-tack'd *Cyrus*, who (as all the World knows) came thundring upon him, and diveſted him of his Kingdoms.

You boaſt, (ſays *Oenomaus* to *Apollo*) *in another* Oracle *delivered to* Crœ-ſus, *that you know the Number of the Grains of the Sea Sand; and I ſuppoſe, you ſet a great Value upon your ſelf, be-cauſe you ſaw from* Delphos, *the* Tor-toiſe, *that* Crœſus *ordered to be boiled in* Lydia, *at that very inſtant; this is a precious Knowledge to be proud of! But when you were conſulted, con-cerning the Succeſs of the War be-tween* Crœſus *and* Cyrus, *there you*

were at a ſtand. If you can divine what ſhall happen in time to come, to what purpoſe do you make uſe of a manner of ſpeaking which cannot be underſtood: do you not foreſee your ſelf that they will not be underſtood: if you do foreſee it, you then take pleaſure to make us your ſport; if you do not know it, let us inform you that you ought to ſpeak more clearly, and that you are not underſtood.

I tell you alſo, if you have a mind to uſe an Equivocation, that the Greek words by which you expreſs, that Croeſus *ſhall deſtroy a great Empire, are not well choſen, and that they can ſignify nothing elſe but a victory of* Croeſus *over* Cyrus. *If there be a neceſſity that things muſt happen, wherefore doſt thou amuſe us with thy Ambiguities? what doſt thou do at* Delphos, *(unhappily employ'd as thou art) to ſing us uſeleſs Prophecies? to what purpoſe do we make thee ſo many Sacrifices? what fury poſſeſſes us?*

But *Oenomaus* is yet more out of humour with the *Oracle*, which *Apollo* deliver'd to the *Athenians*. When *Xerxes* fell upon *Greece* with all the forces

forces of *Asia*, the *Pythian Oracle* gave 'em for answer,

"That *Minerva* Protectress of *Athens* endeavour'd all manner of waies (but in vain) to appease the angerof *Jupiter*; but nevertheless *Jupiter* in favour of his Daughter, consented to suffer the *Athenians* to save themselves in walls of wood; and that *Salamine* shou'd see the Destruction of many Children dear to their Mothers; either when *Ceres* shou'd be scattered abroad or when she should be gathered in.

Upon this *Oenomaus* wholly loses his Respect for the God of *Delphos*.

This combat between the Father and the Daughter, saies he, *is very unhandsom for Gods. 'Tis very pretty there should be in Heaven such contrary interests and inclinations?* Jupiter *is angry with* Athens, *he brings down all the forces of* Asia *against it; but if he could not have ruin'd it without 'em, if he had no more Thunder left, if he was reduc'd to borrow*

so-

foreign forces, how had he it then in his Power to make all the forces of Asia *come down againſt this Town? Yet after this he ſuffers 'em to ſave themſelves in Walls of Wood; on whom then was his Anger to fall? what, on the Stones? Rare Diviner! you know not whom theſe Children ſhall be that* Salamine *ſhall ſee the deſtruction of, whether* Greeks *or* Perſians; *it cannot be avoided but they muſt be either one or t'other Army; and do not you at leaſt know, that we ſhall ſoon ſee you know nothing? you conceal the time of Battel under theſe Poetical expreſſions,* When *Ceres* ſhall be ſcatter'd, or when ſhe ſhall be gather'd in. *You are willing to blind us with this Pompous Language; but does not every body know that a Naval Battel is never fought but either in Seed time or* Harveſt; *doubtleſs it will not be in* Winter. *But let what will happen you will get your ſelf off by the means of this* Jupiter, *whom* Minerva *endeavours to appeaſe; if the* Grecians *looſe the Battel,* Jupiter *is then Inexorable; if they gain it, then* Jupiter *ſuffer'd him-*

himself to be appeas'd. And (Apollo) *when you say, let 'em fly to Walls of Wood, you counsel, you do not Devine. I, who know not what Devining is, cou'd have said as much as this, and cou'd have judg'd as well, that the fury of the War wou'd fall upon* Athens; *and that since the* Athenians *had Ships, the best thing they cou'd do, was to abandon the* Town *and betake themselves to the* Sea.

Such was the veneration that some great sects of the Philosophers had for *Oracles*, and for those very *Gods* they thought the Authors of 'em. 'Tis very pleasant that all the *Pagan* Religion was no more than this one *Problem* of Philosophy; it is necessary to know whether the Gods take care of Men, or not, before the question can be answered, whether we ought to Adore 'em, or neglect 'em; the People have already decided it, and are for Adoration, and nothing is to be seen but *Temples* and *Sacrifices*; but great Sects of the *Philosophers* maintain publickly that

that these *Sacrifices*, these *Temples*, these *Adorations*, are as so many fruitless and unprofitable things; and that the Gods are so far from delighting in 'em, that they take no cognizance of 'em. There is scarce a *Greek* who does not consult the *Oracles* concerning his affairs; but this does not prevent their being treated in three great Schools of *Philosophy* as absolute impostures.

Let me beg leave to carry this reflection a little farther, which may serve to lay more open the *Pagan* Religion; the *Grecians* in general had a great deal of Wit, but they were very light, curious, unquiet, and uncapable of moderation in any thing; and, to tell my whole opinion of 'em, they had so much Wit, that their Reason suffer'd by it. The *Romans* had quite another Character; they were Solid, Serious, and Industrious, they knew how to pursue a design and could foresee at a great distance the consequences of it. I should not be surpris'd that the *Grecians* (without thinking of the re-

sult

fult of things) ſhou'd impertinently treat *pro* and *con* of every thing; and at the ſame time that they are making Sacrifices, diſpute whether or no theſe Sacrifices approach the *Gods*; and conſult *Oracles* without being aſſur'd whether they are meer Illuſions or not. Doubtleſs the *Philoſophers* concern'd themſelves ſo little in the Goverment, that they took no care not to ſhock Religion in their diſputes; and perhaps the People had not faith enough in the *Philoſophers* to abandon their Religion or change any thing in it upon their word. In fine, the predominant paſſion in the *Greeks* was to diſcourſe on all matters at any rate: yet doubtleſs it is more aſtoniſhing to find that the *Romans*, and thoſe the ableſt amongſt them too, and who knew beſt of what conſequence Religion was to politicks, durſt publiſh works that did not only call their Religion in queſtion, but alſo turn'd it into ridicule. I ſpeak of *Cicero*, who in his Books of Divination has ſpar'd nothing of what was moſt

most Sacred at *Rome*. After he had made it evident enough to his very adversaries, how great a folly 'twas to consult the entrails of *Beasts*, he drives them at last to this answer. That the *Gods*, who are Almighty, change these entrails in the very moment of the Sacrifice, to the end that we shou'd by them know their pleasure in things to come. This answer was given by *Chrysippus*, by *Antipater* and *Possidonius*, all great *Philosophers* and chief of the Party of the Stoicks. Ha! what say you? crys *Cicero*: the very old Women are not so credulous as you are. *Can you believe* (says he) *that the same* Calf *has the Liver well disposed, if chosen for the* Sacrifice *by one, and ill disposed, if chosen by another? Can this disposition of the Liver be changed in an instant, to accomodate it self to the fortune of those that* sacrifice? *See you not, that it is chance that makes the choice of victims? does not experience tell you so? for it oftentimes happens that the entrails of one victim may foretel something that is unfor-*

unfortunate and terrible, and those which are immediately after sacrific'd *foretel most happy events. What then becomes of the menaces of these first entrails? What! are the* Gods *so soon Appeas'd? But you'll reply, that in a Bull, which* Cæsar *was sacrificing, there was no heart found; and since this Animal cou'd not live without a Heart, it must of necessity be, that the Heart vanish'd just in the moment of the Sacrifice. Is it possible that you shou'd have sense enough to know that this Bull cou'd not live without an Heart, and yet have not enough to perceive that this heart cou'd not vanish in a moment, I know not whither.* And a little after he adds; *Believe me, you ruine all* Physicks *by defending the Art of Sooth-sayers: for then it is not the ordinary course of Nature that gives Birth and Death to all things: and there are some Bodies which come from nothing and shall return to nothing. What Naturalist ever held this opinion?*

I cite this passage of *Cicero*'s, but as an example of the extream liber-

ty

ty with which he insulted over that Religion which he himself profess'd. In a thousand other places he shows no more favour to Sacred *Fowls*, the flights of *Birds*, and all the Miracles with which the Annals of the chief *Priest* were fill'd. Why did they not Indict him for his Impiety? Why did not all the People regard him with horror? Why did not all the College of *Priests* rise up against him? But we have reason to believe that among the *Pagans*, *Religion* was a practice, the speculation of which was very indifferent. They did as others did, but believ'd what they themselves pleas'd. This principle is very extravagant; but the People who knew nothing of the impertinency of it, were content with it; and the *Philosophers* submitted to it very willingly, because it gave them freedom enough.

So that we may see that all the *Pagan Religion* was meer Ceremony, in which the mind bore no part. The *Gods* are angry, their Thunder is ready to be discharg'd, how shall they be Ap-

appeas'd? Muſt we repent us of the crimes we have committed? Muſt we re-enter into the paths of that natural Juſtice which ought to be among all Men? Not at all; we need only take a *Calf* of ſuch a colour, calv'd at ſuch a time, and cut the Throat of it with ſuch a knife, and this will diſarm the wrath of all the *Gods*: Nay farther, it is permitted you to laugh at the *Sacrifice*, if you have a mind to it; 'twill go never the worſe with you.

Probably 'twas ſo alſo with the *Oracles*: every one believ'd, that wou'd; however they ceas'd not to conſult 'em. So great a force cuſtom has over the minds of Men, that there is no need of Reaſon to join with it.

CHAP. VIII.

That other Men beſides Philoſophers *have had little eſteem for* Oracles.

HIſtories are full of *Oracles*, which were either deſpiſ'd by thoſe who receiv'd 'em, or alter'd according to their fancy.* *Pactias* a *Lydian*, and ſubject of the *Perſians*, being fled to *Cume* a *Greek* Town, the *Perſians* ſent to have him deliver'd up; the *Cumeans* preſently conſult the *Oracles* of the *Branchides*, to know what they ought to do with him; the *Oracle* anſwered, that they ſhou'd deliver up *Pactias*. *Ariſtodicus* one of the Principal *Cumeans*, who was not of this mind, obtained through his credit, that they ſhould ſend a ſecond time to the *Oracle*, and caus'd himſelf to be made one of the Deputies; but the *Oracle* made the ſame anſwer it had done before. *Ariſtodicus* unſatisfied

* Herodot. *Book the firſt.*

ſatisfied with this, as he was walking about the Temple endeavoured to fright away certain little *Birds* which were building their Neſts there; whereupon he preſently heard a voice from the Sanctuary, crying, *Deteſtable Mortal, how dare you fright from this place, thoſe who are under my protection? And yet, great* God, (*replyed* Ariſtodicus) *you Order us to expel* Pactias, *who is under ours? Tes* (*anſwered the* God) *I do order it, to the end that you who are an Impious People, may be the ſooner deſtroyed, and that you may come no more hither to Importune me with your Queſtions.* It ſeems by this that the *God* was preſs'd home, ſince he had recourſe to railing; but it appears alſo that *Ariſtodicus* did not overmuch believe that it was a *God* who gave theſe *Oracles*, becauſe he went about to entrap him by the compariſon of the *Birds*, and after he had in effect trap'd him, 'tis likely that he believ'd him leſs a *God* than he did before. The *Cumeans* themſelves were not much perſwaded of his being a

Deity, since they believed a second deputation might obtain a contrary answer, or that at least the *God* might consider of what he had to say. By the way I observe that *Aristodicus*, when he laid his snare for the *God* could not but foresee that they would not let him fright away the *Birds* from so Holy a Sanctuary without saying any thing to him; and that the *Priests* were extreamly jealous of the honour of their Temples.

*Herodot. *Lib.* 5. The People of *Egina** had ravag'd the Coast of *Attica*, and the *Athenians* prepar'd themselves for an Expedition against them; at what time there came an *Oracle* from *Delphos*, threatning 'em with utter ruine in case they made War with those of *Ægina*, within the compass of thirty years; but when those thirty years were past, they were only to build a Temple to *Æacus* and to undertake the War, and then all things won'd succeed well. The *Athenians*, who burnt with a desire of Revenge, split the *Oracle* in half, and took notice of that part

part of it only, which related to the Temple of *Æacus*, which they built out of Hand; but as to the thirty Years, they ſlighted that, and applyed themſelves immediately to attack the *Ægineans*, and obtained all the Advantages imaginable. This was not a particular Perſon, who had ſo little Regard for the Authority of *Oracles*, but a whole Common-wealth, and that a very ſuperſtitious one too.

It is not very eaſie, to tell what kind of regard the *Pagans* had for their Religion; For we ſaid a little while ago, that they contented themſelves with the outward Reſpect, which their *Philoſophers* paid to the *Oracles*; but this was not always ſo; for I am not certain, that *Socrates* refuſed to offer Incenſe to the *Gods*, or behaved himſelf like other People at the Publick Feſtivals; but this I am ſure of, that the Rabble accuſed him of Atheiſm, though they could only gueſs at his Opinion in this Point; for he never openly explained himſelf. The People knew well enough

what was taught publickly in the Schools of *Philoſophers*; how then could they ſuffer Opinions, contrary to the Eſtabliſhed Worſhip (and often-times even againſt the Exiſtence of the *Gods*) to be there maintained? At leaſt, they knew perfectly well, what was play'd upon the Theaters; for thoſe ſhows were made for them: and it is ſure the *Gods* were never treated with leſs Reſpect, than in the *Comedies* of *Ariſtophanes*. *Mercury* in his *Plutus* complains that ſight was reſtored to the *God* of Riches, who had till that time been blind, and that *Plutus* now beginning equally to favour all the World, the other *Gods* (to whom People no longer made Sacrifices to obtain Wealth) were ſtarved for Hunger: And *Mercury* carries the Humor on ſo far, as to look out for ſome mean Imployment in a Citizen's Houſe, that he might have Meat and Drink. *The Birds* of *Ariſtophanes* are alſo very bold. All the Comedy turns upon this, That a certain City of Birds, which was

deſigned

designed to be built in the Air, would interrupt the Trade and Correspondence that was carried on between the Gods and Men; and by rendering the Birds Masters of all, would reduce the Gods to the utmost Misery: I leave you to judge, if this be not mighty devout. Yet this was the same *Aristophanes*, who endeavoured to excite the Rabble against the pretended Impiety of *Socrates*: There is therefore something, which I know not how to express, that is often found in the Affairs of this World. And it is apparent by these Examples, and may be made so by an Infinity of others, if there were Occasion, that the People were sometimes in a Humor to hear with delight their Religion rallied upon, and turned into a Jest; and if they observed Ceremonies, it was only to free themselves from those Inconveniences which attend an open neglect of them; but 'tis evident, that at the bottom, they had not overmuch Faith in them: And they had just the same Respect for *Oracles*: For

most commonly*, they consulted them, that they might have no more Occasion to consult them; and if the Answers were not accommodated to their Designs, they did not much trouble themselves to obey them; for perhaps, it was no constant Opinion even amongst the common People, that *Oracles* were delivered by a Divine Power.

After all this, it would be unnecessary to mention the Histories of those great Captains, who thought it no Crime, to reckon themselves above both *Oracles* and Auguries. And what is most remarkable, is, that this dis-esteem of Religion was practised even in the first Ages of the *Roman* Common-wealth: In those times of happy Ignorance, when Men were so scrupulously fond of their Religion, and when (as *Titus Livius* says in a Place, which I am going to cite) *Philosophy*, which taught Men to despise the Gods, was not yet known.

* *Liv. lib. 10.* * *Papirius* made War with the *Samnites*, and in a certain conjun-

cture

ſture of time, when the *Roman* Army with an extreme ardor, deſired to come to a Battel, the ſacred Chickens (forſooth) muſt be conſulted; but the earneſtneſs to fight was ſo general, that though the Chickens eat nothing at all, when they put them out of the Coop, yet thoſe, who were appointed to obſerve the *Augury*, reported to the *Conſul*, that they had eaten very well: Upon this, the *Conſul* promiſed to his Souldiers both a Battel and Victory. But however ſecret this *Augury* was kept, the deceit broke out at laſt, and there aroſe a great Conteſt amongſt the Keepers of the Chickens, about the falſe report that was made: The noiſe of which came to the ears of *Papirius*, who ſaid, that for his Part, he had received a very favourable *Augury*, and that he was ſatisfied with it, and if what was told him were untrue, let thoſe, whoſe Buſineſs it was to take the *Augury*, look to it; for all the evil would fall upon their Heads. Immediately therefore he ordered, that thoſe unhappy

happy People, the Keepers of the Sacred Chickens ſhould be placed in the firſt Ranks, and ſo before the ſignal of the Battel was given, an Arrow (from whence ſhot none knew) pierced that poor unlucky Keeper who had given a falſe account of the *Augury*; as ſoon as the *Conſul* heard this News, he cried out aloud—— *The Gods are here preſent: The Criminal is puniſh'd: They have diſcharged all their Anger on him, who deſerved it, and we have now all the Reaſon in the World to hope the beſt.* Then immediately, he cauſed the Signal to be given, and gained an intire Victory over the *Samnites*.

It is very apparent, that the Gods had a leſs ſhare in the Death of this Poor Keeper than *Papirius*; and that the General had a Deſign, by his Death, to encourage thoſe Souldiers, whom the falſneſs of the *Augury* might have terrifi'd; for the *Romans* were acquainted with theſe Arts and Tricks in the times of their greateſt Simplicity.

It

It muſt be confeſſed then, that we ſhould be much in the Wrong, if we ſhould believe theſe *Auguries* and *Oracles*, which the *Pagans* themſelves did not believe: And if we will not think as meanly of them, as ſome Philoſophers, and ſome Generals of Armies did; yet let us at leaſt have ſuch thoughts of them, as the People themſelves ſometimes had.

But doubtleſs (may ſome object) all the *Pagans* did not deſpiſe *Oracles*: And ſome particular Perſons, that had no regard for them, are not ſufficient intirely to diſcredit them. And to the Authority of thoſe who did not believe them, we need do no more than oppoſe the Authority of thoſe that did.

But it may be anſwered, that theſe two Authorities are not of equal Strength; for the Teſtimony of thoſe who uphold a thing that is already eſtabliſhed, contributes not much to the ſupport of it; but the Teſtimony of thoſe who do not believe it, is of Force enough to deſtroy it; for thoſe who do believe a thing, may perhaps

perhaps not know the Reasons, that may be given against the belief of it; but those who do not believe it, cannot chuse but know, why others believe it.

It is quite contrary, when a new thing is to be introduced; for in that case, the Testimony of those that believe it, carries more weight with it, than the Testimony of those who do not believe it; for 'tis probably to be supposed, that those who believe it, must needs have examined it; and those who do not believe it, may perhaps not have considered of it.

I will not say, that either in the one or the other Case, the Authority of those who believe, or believe not, is a final decision; but I will say, that without a regard be had to the Reasons on which the two Parties found themselves, sometimes the Authority of one seems more receivable, and sometimes that of the other. Upon the whole Matter, in quitting a common Opinion, or in receiving a new one, we make use of our Reason (whether it be good or bad;) but there

there is no need of making use of any to reject a new opinion, or to take up one that is already common; for we have need of strength to resist a torrent, but we need none to follow it.

And it avails not to the credit of *Oracles*, that among those who believe, that there is something in 'em of divine and supernatural, there shou'd be found some *Philosophers* of great name, such as the *Stoicks* are; for when *Philosophers* are once prepossess'd with any thing, they are more incurable than the common People, and are as much blinded with prejudices and false Reasons, with which they uphold their opinion. The *Stoicks* in particular (as proud and supercilious a Sect as they were) held some opinions which deserv'd pity. How cou'd they chuse but believe *Oracles*, who believ'd *Dreams*? The great *Chrysippus* himself adopted some points for articles of his faith, which had been more suitable for the belief of some silly Old Woman.

CHAP.

CHAP. IX.

That the Ancient Christians themselves did not very firmly believe that Oracles were deliver'd by Dæmons.

ALtho' the Learned *Christians* in the first Ages, were fond enough of asserting that *Oracles* were deliver'd by *Dæmons*, yet they wou'd very often reproach the *Heathens* with their being imposed upon by their *Priests*: Which thing was undoubtedly true, since they asserted it, even with the hazard of losing this system of *Dæmons*, which they esteemed so favourable to 'em.

Thus *Clement Alexandrinus* speaks in his third Book of *Tapistries*.

Boast, if you will, of your Oracles, *full of folly and impertinence, of those of* Claros, *of* Apollo Pythius, *of* Didymus *of* Amphiaraus, *and of* Amphilocus. *You may yet add your* Augurs *and*

In-

Interpreters of Dreams and Prodigies. Show us in the Presence of Apollo Pythius, *those Men who divined by Flower or by Barley, and those who have been so esteemed, because they spoke out of their Bellies. Let the Secrets of the* Ægyptian *Temples, and of the* Hetrurian *Necromancers remain still in Darkness, for they are certainly all but extravagant Impostures and Deceits, no better than meer cheating at Dice: And the Goats which are kept for Divination, and the Ravens which are taught to deliver Oracles, are but at the Assistants or Zaneys of Mountebanks, who cozen all Mankind.*

Eusebius, in the Beginning of his fourth Book of *Evangelical Preparations*, proposes at large the best Reasons in the World to prove, that *Oracles* could be no other, than Impostures: And it is upon those very Reasons, that I pretend to support my self, when I come to treat of the cheats of *Oracles* in particular.

Never-

Nevertheleſs, I muſt confeſs, that tho *Euſebius* knew ſo very well how to prove, that *Oracles* could not be ſupernatural, yet he attributes them to *Dæmons*; and the Authority of a Man ſo well inſtructed with the Reaſons on both ſides, is a very great encouragement to the Party which he embraces.

But it is to be noted, that after *Euſebius* had very well proved, that *Oracles* could be no other than the Impoſtures of *Prieſts*; he aſſures us (without either deſtroying or weakning thoſe firſt Proofs) that for all this, they were delivered by *Dæmons*. But he ought to have cited ſome unſuſpected *Oracle*, which had been delivered in ſuch Circumſtances, that although many others might be imputed to the Artifices of *Prieſts*, yet that could not. But *Euſebius* has done no ſuch thing. This is, as if he ſhould ſay, I clearly ſee, that all the *Oracles* can be no other than Cheats; but yet, I will not believe them to be ſo, becauſe it ſerves my purpoſe, that the Devil ſhould now and then enter into an *Oracle*. This

This is a very lamentable kind of reasoning. But I must confess, if *Eusebius* (in the Circumstances of the times which he lived in) durst not have said openly, that *Oracles* were not the Works of *Dæmons*, it had been excusable; but then in seeming to maintain that they were so, he ought to have managed his Arguments in such a way, that he might have insinuated the contrary with the best Address he was capable of. But we are at liberty to guess at the Reasons, that guided *Eusebius* in this matter, according to the Esteem we have of him: For my own part, I believe clearly, that he asserted these Oracular *Dæmons*, rather by way of Apology and from a forced Respect he had for the common Opinion, than on any other Account.

There is a passage of *Origen*, in his Seventh Book against *Celsus*, which sufficiently proves that he attributed *Oracles* to *Dæmons*, only to accommodate himself to the Times, and to the Disputes, which in that Age were between the *Christians* and the

Pagans. I might (said he) *make use of the Authority of* Aristotle, *and the* Peripateticks, *to render the* Pythian Oracle *suspected: I could draw from* Epicurus *and those of his Sect, an Infinity of things, that would discredit* Oracles; *and I could easily make it appear, that the* Greeks *themselves made no great Account of them; but conceding that they were not fictions, nor Impostures, let us examine the Case a little more carefully, and consider, whether there were any Necessity, that a God should have any business there, and if it were not more reasonable to believe, that they were managed by evil* Dæmons *and* Genii, *that were Enemies to Mankind.*

It is sufficiently evident, that *Origen* was inclined to believe of *Oracles*, as we do; but the *Pagans*, who used them for a Proof of the Divinity of their Religion, had no Reason to consent, that they were but the Artifices of their Priests: So, that to gain a little upon the *Pagans*, there was a necessity of yielding to them, what they maintained with so much Obstinacy,

Obſtinacy, and to let them ſee, that tho there might be ſomething of Supernatural in the *Oracles*, yet there was no reaſon to ſay, that a true Divinity was concerned in them; and ſo *Dæmons* were to be brought upon the Stage.

'Tis true, that it had been much better wholly to have excluded even theſe *Dæmons* from *Oracles*; and by that means, the greateſt blow would indeed have been given to the *Pagan* Religion that can be imagined. But all the World perhaps did not enter ſo deep into this Matter, and they thought they had done enough, when by the *Hypotheſis* of *Dæmons*, (which ſolves the whole Buſineſs in two words,) they diſparaged all thoſe Miracles, which the *Pagans* could alledge for their falſe Worſhip.

This, it is probable, was the Cauſe, why in the firſt Ages of the Church, Men ſo generally embraced this Opinion concerning *Oracles*. For we ſee clearly enough into the Darkneſs of remote Antiquity, to diſcover, that *Chriſtians* did not hold this Opinion

ſo much for the truth, which they found in it, as for the Advantages, which it gave them in their Diſputes againſt *Paganiſm*: And could they be born again in the Age wherein we live, I doubt not, but that being then delivered, like us, from thoſe ſtrange Notions, that obliged them to that *Hypotheſis*, they would have had (almoſt all of them) the ſame diſeſteem of *Oracles*, as we have at this time.

Hitherto, we have only taken away the Prejudices that are contrary to our Opinion, and which are drawn, either from the Syſtem of the *Chriſtian Religion*, or elſe from *Philoſophy*, with the general Conſent of both *Pagans* and *Chriſtians*. We have anſwered all this, not only by making a ſimple Defence, but very often by ſtarting Objections; but now we ſhall make our Aſſaults with greater Vigour, and demonſtrate by all thoſe particular Circumſtances, which we can remark in *Oracles*, that they never ought to have been attributed to *Dæmons*.

CHAP.

CHAP. X.

That Oracles *were corrupted by Bribery.*

IT was ſo eaſy a matter to corrupt theſe *Oracles*, that it was very evident that they were managed by Men. *The Pythian Prieſteſs Philipiſes*, ſaid *Demoſthenes*, when he was complaining that the *Oracles* of *Delphos* were alwaies conformable to the intereſt of *Philip*.

* When *Cleomenes* King of *Sparta* was minded to dethrone *Demaratus* the former King, on pretence that he was not the Son of *Ariſton* his predeceſſor, and that *Ariſton* himſelf had complain'd that his Son was born a little too ſoon after his Marriage, the *Oracle* was conſulted on ſo difficult a queſtion; for the thing was of ſuch a Nature, that it cou'd be decided only by the *Gods*. But *Cleomenes* himſelf went beforehand to engage the chief *Prieſteſs* of *Delphos*, and ſo ſhe de-

* Herod. *Lib.* 6.

declar'd that *Demaratus* was not the Son of *Ariſton*. The cheat was ſometime after diſcover'd, and the *Prieſteſs* depriv'd of her Dignity; for they were bound to revenge this diſhonour done to their *Oracles*, and to endeavour to repair their loſt credit.

* Herod. *Lib.* 5.

*During the time that *Hippias* was Tyrant of *Athens*, ſome Citizens whom he had Baniſh'd, obtain'd of the *Pythian Prieſteſs* by the force of Money, that when the *Lacedæmonians* ſhou'd come to conſult her (no matter on what affairs) ſhe ſhould always tell 'em, they muſt deliver *Athens* from Tyrany. And the *Lacedæmonians*, to whom the ſame thing was always repeated, whatever they came about, believ'd at laſt, that the *Gods* wou'd never Pardon them, if they contemn'd their ſo frequent Orders; and thereupon they took up Arms againſt *Hippias*, tho' he were their *Ally*.

If the *Dæmons* delivered *Oracles*, they were alwaies full of complaiſance to thoſe *Princes* that were once be-

become redoubted; and 'tis to be noted that *Hell* had a very great regard for *Alexander* and *Augustus*. Some Historians tell us plainly that *Alexander* had a mind by his absolute Authority to make himself the Son of *Jupiter Ammon*, both for his interest and the Honour of his Mother, who was suspected to have had a gallant much less considerable than *Jupiter*: and they add, that before he went to the *Temple*, he caus'd the *God* to be advertis'd of his will and pleasure; and the *God* very honestly obeyed his command. Other Authors hold, that the *Priests* found out of themselves this way of flattering *Alexander*. There is none but *Plutarch* that grounds this Divinity of *Alexander* on a mistake of the *Priest* of *Ammon*, who saluting this King, and intending to say to him in Greek, *Oh my Son*, pronounc'd a σ for a ν, (for he was a *Lybian*, and knew not well how to pronounce the *Greek*;) and the words with this change signify, *Oh Son of Jupiter*. And the whole Court fail'd not to

Ὦ παῖ δίος for Ὦ παιδίον.

construe this mistake of the *Priest*, to the advantage of *Alexander*; and without doubt the *Priest* himself made it pass for an Inspiration of the *God* who had directed his Tongue, and so by *Oracles* afterwards confirm'd his ill pronounciation. This last manner of relating this History pleases me extreamly, for I love to find very little Originals give rise to mighty things; this seems to me to be probable, and a Mockery worthy of sporting fortune.

*Pruden. * *Augustus* was so in Love with *Livia*, that he took her by force from her Husband, big with Child as she was; and so impatient, was his Passion, that he would not defer his Marriage till she were delivered, but the action being something extraordinary the *Oracle* was consulted about it; who knew well how to make its Court to so glorious a Monarch, and was not only content to approve the Marriage, but assur'd him, that Weddings never succeeded better, than when the Bride was already with Child. This seems

to

to me a very ſtrange Maxim.

There were at *Sparta* but two families, out of which they might chuſe their Kings. But *Lyſander*, one of the greateſt Men that ever *Sparta* bred, fram'd a deſign to take away this diſtinction, too advantageous for thoſe two Families, and too injurious to all the reſt; and to open a way to Royalty for all thoſe who had merit enough to pretend to it. In order to this, he contriv'd ſo perplex'd a plot, that I admire how a Man of Wit could hope to draw any ſucceſs from it. *Plutarch* ſays very well, that it was like a Mathematical Demonſtration, to which no Man arrives but by tedious methods. There was a Woman in *Pontus* who pretended to be Big with Child by *Apollo*; *Lyſander* caſt his thoughts upon this Son of *Apollo*, intending to make uſe of him when he ſhou'd be born; (this it was to have a very great foreſight) and he cauſes a report to be ſpread abroad, that the *Prieſts* of *Delphos* had in their poſſeſſion very ancient *Oracles* which they were not per-

permitted to read, because *Apollo* had reserv'd that privilege for some one that should come of his blood, and who should come to *Delphos* to justify his descent. The Child of the Woman at *Pontus* was to be this Son of *Apollo*; and it was contriv'd that amongst those mysterious *Oracles*, so closely conceal'd, there should be one found out, which should declare to the *Spartans* that they ought to give the Crown to Desert only, without having any regard to Families. So that now nothing remain'd but to shape up some *Oracles*; to get this Son of *Apollo* (who was called *Silenus*) into the project, to make him come to *Delphos*, and to bribe the *Priests*. All this was done, which seems to me very surprizing; for what strange machines must they have made use of, for the accomplishing so great a design? *Silenus* comes to *Greece* and prepares to make himself known at *Delphos* for the Son of *Apollo*; but, as ill luck would have it, one of *Lysander*'s creatures having some terrors upon him; at last when he found

found himself embark'd in so dangerous an affair, spoil'd all.

There is scarce a more remarkable example to be found in all History of the corruption of *Oracles*; but in reporting it, I will not dissemble a truth which my Author saies nothing of; which is, that *Lysander* had before endeavour'd to corrupt many other *Oracles*, but could not accomplish it. *Dodona* refused to take his money, *Jupiter Ammon* was inflexible, and even the *Priests* of the place sent deputies to *Sparta* to accuse *Lysander*; but by the force of his credit he got himself clear of that affair. The great *Priestess* of *Delphos* denyed to sell him her voice. And this makes me believe, that there were in *Delphos* two Colleges, which held no communication with one another, the one of *Priests*, the other of *Priestesses*; for *Lysander*, who could not corrupt the great *Priestess*, could yet sufficiently corrupt the *Priests*. The *Priestesses* were those only who deliver'd the *Oracles Viva voce*, and who with a thousand Antick motions and grimaces

ces acted the Poſſeſs'd on the *Tripos*, and ſeemed to rage, with the inſpirations of the God; but in all probability the *Prieſts* had a Ware-houſe of Written *Prophecies*, of which they were the Maſters, the Diſpenſers, and the Interpreters.

It is not to be doubted, but that the *Prieſts*, for the honour of their trade would ſeem very nice and ſcrupulous to thoſe who deſir'd to bribe 'em, eſpecially when things were requir'd wherein there was no reaſon to hope for much ſucceſs; ſuch was the novelty, which *Lyſander* had a deſign to introduce into the government of *Sparta*: and perhaps the faction of *Ageſilaus*, which was againſt that of *Lyſander*, was ſomewhat jealous of his project, and had been before-hand with the *Oracles*. Nor is it to be imagin'd, that the *Prieſts* of *Ammon* would have taken the pains to have come from the fartheſt part of *Libya* to *Sparta*, to have accuſed ſo great a Man as *Lyſander*, if there had not been a very good underſtanding between their *Oracles* and

and his Enemies, who encouraged them to accuse him.

CHAP. XI.

Of the Erection of new Oracles.

THe *Oracles*, which were sometimes erected anew, do as much weaken the *Hypothesis* of *Dæmons*, as the *Oracles* that were corrupted by Bribery.

After the Death of *Ephæstion*, *Alexander*, to comfort himself, would needs have it believed, that *Ephæstion* was a God; To which, all his Courtiers consented without any Difficulty: And immediately, Temples were erected in many Cities to *Ephæstion*, Festivals were instituted to his Honour, Sacrifices were made to him, Miraculous Cures were attributed to him, and in fine (that nothing at all might be wanting) they made him deliver *Oracles*. *Lucian* says,

says, that *Alexander*, who was at first astonished to see the Divinity of *Ephæstion* have such Success, believed it himself at length to be true, and found a great deal of Pleasure, in thinking not only, that he himself was a God, but that he had also the Power of making *Gods*.

Adrian committed the same Folly for the lovely *Antinous*: In Honour of whose Memory he built the City of *Antinopolis*, he consecrated Temples and Prophets to him (says St. *Jerome*:) Now there were no Prophets, but in those Temples where there were *Oracles*. And there is yet remaining this *Greek* Inscription:

To Antinous,

The Companion of the Gods of Egypt. M. Ulpius Apollonius, his *Prophet.*

After this, we need not wonder, that *Augustus* also delivered *Oracles*, as we find it in *Prudentius*: And certainly *Augustus* was as fit to be worshipped

ſhipped as *Antinous* or *Ephæſtion*, who according to all likelihood, owed their Divinity only to their Beauty.

Without doubt, theſe new *Oracles* cauſed even thoſe, who were the leaſt capable of thinking, to make Reflections upon them. Was there not Reaſon to believe, that theſe were of the ſame Nature with the Ancient ones? And to make a due Judgment on the firſt beginnings of thoſe of *Amphiaraus*, *Trophonius*, *Orpheus*, and of *Apollo* himſelf, they needed no more, than to conſider thoſe of *Ephæſtion*, *Antinous* and *Auguſtus*.

'Tis plain however, that they were not in like Credit with thoſe of more ancient Dates, and that there is a vaſt difference between them; for they ſtinted the Gods of the new Edition to certain Anſwers, that were neceſſary for the flattering of Princes; but for any thing elſe, they were not ſeriouſly conſulted.

For when Queſtions of Importance were to be asked, they went to *Delphos*. The ancient *Tripodes* had been in Poſſeſſion of Futurity, time out of Mind;

Mind; and the word of a good ſage, experienced God was far more authentick than that of theſe Upſtarts, who were leſs verſed in the Trade. The *Roman* Emperors, whoſe Intereſt it was to advance and ſet a value on the Divinity of their Predeceſſors (ſince themſelves claimed the ſame) would have endeavoured to have render'd the *Oracles* of the deified *Emperors* (ſuch as *Auguſtus* was) more celebrated, if it had not been that the People, accuſtomed to their ancient *Oracles*, could not have the ſame Confidence in theſe; for I would willingly believe, that, what Inclination ſoever they had to the moſt ridiculous ſuperſtitions, yet they laugh'd at theſe new *Oracles*, and in general, at all the Conſecrations of new Gods: For how could they poſſibly take the Eagle, which flew out of the flaming Funeral Pile of a *Roman* Emperor, to be the Soul of that Emperor, that was taking its Flight to Heaven?

How then came it to paſs, that People were deceived at the firſt Erection

rection of Gods and *Oracles*? Thus it was, as I conjecture. As for the *Gods*, *Paganism* had only two principal sorts of them, either *Gods* who were supposed to be essentially of a Divine Nature, or *Gods* which did not become so, till after they had been of a humane Nature first. The former sort were declared *Gods* by the Learned, or by the Legislators with a multitude of Mysteries; and the People neither saw them, nor ever had seen them: The second sort (tho' the whole World knew that they had been *Men*, yet they) were made *Gods* by the Inclination of the People, in Memory of their Vertues. They framed to themselves a very elevated *Idea* of the one sort, because they were above their view; and of the other, because they loved them. But they could not have that Devotion for a *Roman* Emperor, who was only made a God by the Favour and Order of the Court, and not by the Love of the People, and who besides this, was known so very lately to have been a Man.

As for the *Oracles*, their first Establishment is not difficult to unfold: For find me but half a dozen Persons, whom I can perswade that it is not the Sun that makes the Day, and I will not despair of prevailing with a whole Nation to embrace the same Opinion: For however ridiculous any thing seems at first, if you can but maintain it for some time, so that it gains the Authority of Antiquity, it is then sufficiently proved.

There was on the top of *Parnassus* a hole, out of which an Exhalation came, which was of such a Nature, that it made Goats dance and caper, by fuming into their Heads; and perhaps some Body, whose Head was filled with this Exhalation became an *Enthusiast*, fell a talking, without knowing what he said, and by chance spoke truth. Immediately, there was something Divine fansied to be in this Exhalation, and that it contained the Knowledge of Futurity; then, they begin to approach this hole with Veneration, and Ceremonies are by little and little

tle introduced. Thus in all probability, the *Oracle* of *Delphos* was at first erected. And as it owed its Original to an Exhalation, which infected the Head, there was a necessity that the *Pythian Priestess* should be in a Fury, when she was to prophesie; but in the greatest part of the other *Oracles*, Fury was not practised. Let but one *Oracle* be set up, and you need not doubt but a thousand will follow the Example; for if the Gods can speak in one, why should they not do so as well in others? The People struck with the Wonder of the thing, and finding of what use it would be, and covetous of the Profit, which they expected from it, desired nothing more than to see *Oracles* set up in every place; and in time, all these *Oracles* got the Advantage of Antiquity, which stood them in great stead. And it could not be expected, that the new ones should have such Success, since they were established by *Princes*: whereas the People are most willing to believe, what they make themselves.

Add to all this, that at the time of the first institution both of *Gods* and *Oracles*, Ignorance was much greater than it was afterwards. Philosophy was not then known in the World, and the most extravagant superstitions had met with no contradiction from thence. 'Tis true that those we call *the People* are never mighty knowing; yet the dulness, with which they are always possess'd, receives some difference according to the Ages in which they live. But there are some Ages wherein all the World are the People, and those times without comparison are the most favourable for the introduction of errors. 'Tis no wonder then, that the People had a less esteem for the new *Oracles*, than for the Ancient ones; but this makes not the old *Oracles* any whit better than the new ones. Now either a *Dæmon* went to lodge in the Statue of *Ephæstion*, to deliver *Oracles* from thence (as soon as it pleas'd *Alexander* to erect one to him as to a God:) or if the Statue deliver'd *Oracles* without this *Dæ-*

mon

mon, then that of *Apollo Pythius* might do so as well. And it seems to me very strange and surprizing, that the fancy of *Alexander* should be able to send a *Dæmon* to take possession of a Statue, which by that means only was to become an eternal occasion of error to all Men.

CHAP. XII.

Of the places where Oracles *were.*

WE shall now enter upon the History of those Artifices and cheats what the *Priests* practis'd: which contains many things of Antiquity very agreeable and particular.

Countries that were Mountainous (and by consequence full of holes, and caverns) were alwaies fullest of *Oracles*; such was *Bœotia*, which anciently, as *Plutarch* saies, had a number of them. Where by the way

you may obſerve that the *Bœotians* had the repute of being the fooliſheſt Nation of the World; and therefore it was a fit country for *Oracles*, being full of blockheads and Caverns.

I cannot believe that the firſt eſtabliſhment of *Oracles* was a deſign'd cheat; but that the People fell into ſome ſuperſtition which gave 'em a beginning, and that afterwards *Men of Wit* made their advantages of 'em. For the weakneſs of the People is oftentimes greater than could have been foreſeen; and many times thoſe that deceive 'em, think of nothing leſs, until they themſelves give ſome opportunity for the fraud. And my opinion is, that *Oracles* were not therefore placed in *Bœotia*, becauſe 'tis Mountainous; but becauſe the *Oracle* of *Delphos* had by chance its beginning there, after the manner which we have related, therefore others, that were made in imitation of that in the ſame country, were ſituated alſo in the Caverns: the conveniences of which for that purpoſe, were

were very well known to the *Prieſts*.

This cuſtom afterwards ſpread it ſelf every where; for the pretence of Divine exhalations render'd theſe caverns neceſſary: and beſides caverns of themſelves affect one with a certain horror, which does not a little advance ſuperſtition; and in things that are only to make impreſſions on the imaginations of Men nothing is to be neglected. It may be alſo, that the ſituation of *Delphos* contributed to the making it be eſteem'd as a holy Town; it was built on a ſmall level which was half way up the Mountain of *Parnaſſus*, and encompaſs'd with precipices which fortify'd it without the help of art. That part of the Mountain which was above it, had the reſemblance of a *Theatre*; and the voice of Men, and the ſound of Trumpets was multiply'd by the echoes of the Rocks. Do not you believe then, that they knew how to make even theſe Echoes of great uſe to 'em?

The advantages of the *Prieſts*, and the majeſty of the *Oracles*, do equal-

ly require theſe caverns; for which reaſon there was no great number of theſe prophetick Temples ſituated on Plains; but yet there were ſome, whoſe defects the *Prieſts* knew well enough how to remedy, and inſtead of natural caverns, to accomodate 'em with Artificial ones, that is to ſay, what they call Sanctuaries, which were a ſort of Caves where the Divinity perpetually reſided, and where none but the *Prieſts* ever enter'd.

* Plutar. Dial. *that Oracles are not ceas'd.*

* When the *Pythian Prieſteſs* placed her ſelf upon the *Tripos*, it was in her Sanctuary, an obſcure place at ſome diſtance from a certain little chamber, wherein thoſe who came to conſult the *Oracles* were to ſtand. The entrance of this Sanctuary was all cover'd over with boughs of *Laurel*, by whch means thoſe who had the liberty of approaching it, could make no diſcoveries.

From whence do you think, proceeds the diverſity that is to be found in the deſcription which the Ancients give of their oracles? It is becauſe

cauſe they never ſaw what paſs'd in the moſt ſacred receſſes of their Temples.

For example, they agree not among themſelves about the *Oracle* of *Dodona*, and yet what could be better known to the *Greeks*? *Ariſtotle*, (as *Suidas* reports) writes, that at *Dodona* there were two columns, upon one of which there was a Baſon of Braſs, and upon the other a Statue of a Child who held a Whip, the cords of which being alſo of Braſs made a noiſe againſt the Baſon, when they were agitated by the Wind.

Demon (according to the ſame *Suidas*) ſays that the *Oracle* of *Jupiter* at *Dodona* is all encompaſs'd with Baſons, of which, when any one is puſh'd againſt the next, the motion is communicated all round to the reſt, and they make a din, which continues for ſome time.

Others ſay, that there was a reſounding *Oak*, which ſhook its Branches, and leaves together, all the while the *Oracle* was conſulted; and its meaning

ning was pronounced by the *Priestesses* called *Dodonides*. It is plain from all this that there was nothing certain but the noise, which was to be heard from without; but not seeing the inward Sanctuary, where the *Oracle* resided, they only knew, but by conjecture, and the fallacious reports of the *Priests* what caus'd this noise. Yet we find in History, that some few had the privilege to enter into these Sanctuaries; but they were persons of no less quality than *Alexander* and *Vespasian*. *Strabo* reports from *Callisthenes* that *Alexander* enter'd alone with the *Priest* into the Sanctuary of *Ammon*, and that all the rest heard the *Oracle* only from without.

Tacitus also relates that *Vespasian* when he was at *Alexandria*, (having already a design upon the Empire) would needs consult the *Oracle* of *Serapis*; but before he enter'd, he made every body quit the *Temple*; and yet for all this, perhaps he did not enter into the *Sanctuary*. But the instances of this privilege are very

very rare; for my Author averrs that he never knew of any other than these two; unless you will add what *Tacitus* says of *Titus*, to whom the *Priest* of *Paphian Venus* discovered in secret many great things, concerning the designs which he had then in hand. But yet this example proves less than that of *Vespasian*, that the *Priests* allow'd great Men the liberty of entring into the *Sanctuary* of their *Temples*. Doubtless one ought to have a great deal of credit with the *Priests*, to oblige 'em to discover the *Arcana* of their mysteries; but they did it only to Princes, whose Interest they knew it was to keep the secret; and who, in the circumstances which they were then in, had some particular reason to raise and not lessen the reputation of *Oracles*.

In these dark *Sanctuaries* it was, that all the machines of the *Priests* lay; and they enter'd into them by intricate paths under ground. *Rufinus* describes to us the *Temple* of *Serapis* full of covert ways: and (to bring a testimony yet stronger than his)

his) do not the Holy Scriptures discover to us the impostures of the *Priests* of *Belus*, who had a private conveyance to enter secretly into his *Temple*, and to take away the meat which was there offer'd to him? It seems to me that this History alone ought to decide the whole question in our favour; for we there have an account of one of the miracles of *Paganism*, which was the most universally believ'd, how that the *Gods* took the pains to come and Eat the consecrated meat, themselves. Do the Scriptures attribute this prodigy to *Dæmons*? not at all; but to the *Priests*, who were impostors. And it is in this place alone that the Scriptures vouchsafe to give the description of a *Pagan* miracle; and by not advertising us that the rest were not of the same nature, they give us plainly to understand that they were. After all, how much easier was it to perswade People that the *Gods* descended into Statues to speak to 'em, and give 'em wholesome instructions, than that they came down to Eat the members

of

of *Goats* and *Sheep*; and therefore surely if it was the *Priests* that Eat and not the *Gods*, by much stronger reason, it was they that pronounced the *Oracles* in their stead.

The Cavities of the *Sanctuary*, increas'd the voice, and caus'd rebounding Echoes, which imprinted a sort of awful terror in all that approach'd it: you see also in all the Poets that the *Pythian Priestesses* strain'd their voices, so much beyond the pitch of nature, that they appear'd to be more than humane. Perhaps too that sort of * Trumpet which multiplies the sound, was not then altogether unknown: and it may be Sir, *Samuel Moreland*, has but revived this secret, which the *Pagan Priests* knew before him; tho' they chose rather to get profit by concealing it, than honour by publishing it. And Father *Kirker* assures us that *Alexander* had one of these instruments, with which he made himself be heard by his whole Army at the same time. There is one little thing which I will not forget, because it serves to demonstrate

* *Sir* Sam. Morelands *speaking Trumpet.*

ſtrate the extream application which the *Prieſts* had to cheating. From the *Sanctuary* or bottom of the *Temple* there came out ſometimes a very agreeable vapour which fill'd all the place where the Conſulters were: It was the arrival of the *God*, you muſt know, that perfum'd all. Judge then, if Men who carried on their impoſtures ſo curiouſly as to deſcend to theſe trifles, would neglect any thing that was eſſential.

CHAP. XIII.

Of the Diſtinctions of days, and other Myſteries of Oracles.

THE *Prieſts* neglected not any kind of precaution; and therefore they had certain days on which no man was permitted to conſult the *Oracle*. This had a myſterious *Air*, which is ſtill much practis'd in like matters; but yet the chief advantage which they drew from

from it, was, that they could put you off with this pretext till another time, either if they had no mind to give you any answer at all, or if they thought fit to have this time of silence for the taking their measures and making their preparatives.

On occasion of these pretended unlucky days, there was deliver'd to *Alexander* one of the pleasantest *Oracles* that ever was. He went to *Delphos* to consult the *God*, and the *Priestess*, pretending that it was not then a lawful time to interrogate, would not enter into the *Temple*. *Alexander*, who was very rough and impatient, took the *Priestess* by the Arm and led her in by force; whereupon she cry'd out, *Ah, my Son, you are not to be resisted. I desire no more*, (says Alexander) *this* Oracle *is enough for me.*

But the *Priests* had got another secret to gain time when they pleased. Before they would consult the *Oracles* they must Sacrifice; and if the entrails of the victim were not lucky, then the *God* was not in an humour

mour to anſwer; now none judged of the victims but the *Prieſts*: and for the moſt part (as it appears by many examples) they were alone when they examin'd 'em: And often, to delay the time, they would make men begin their Sacrifice a new, and bring a ſecond victim, tho' they had already offer'd one that had the fineſt Heart and Liver in the World.

What werecall'd the Myſteries and ſecret Ceremonies of the *Gods*, were without doubt the beſt Artifices the *Prieſts* could invent to keep People in the dark: and yet they could not ſo well hide the juggle, but that the cheat would be ſuſpected by many perſons; and therefore they contrived among themſelves to eſtabliſh certain Myſteries, which ſhould ingage thoſe that were initiated into them to an inviolable ſecrecy.

'Tis true there were myſteries in thoſe *Temples* where there were no *Oracles* but there were no *Oracles* but what had myſteries: as for inſtance in that of *Delphos*. *Plutarch*, in his *Dialogues* ſo often cited, ſays, that

that there was no Person in the Town of *Delphos*, nor in all that Country, that was not initiated into their mysteries, and so every body had his dependance on the *Priests*; and if any one had dared to have opened his mouth against 'em, they presently cryed out, *O the Atheist! O the impious Man!* and he would have drawn upon himself by his plain dealing such inconveniences, as he could never have got quit of. But yet if there had been no such mysteries, the inhabitants of *Delphos* would have been alwaies obliged to have conceal'd the knavery of their *Priests*; for *Delphos* was a *City* which had no other Revenue but that of its *Temple*, and was maintain'd only by its *Oracle*; but for all that, the *Priests* were not contented till they had secured the People to themselves by a double tie, and so they annexed superstition to their interest. And without doubt a Man who had spoken ill of their *Oracles*, would have been wonderous well received in such a Town.

Those, who were initiated into their mysteries, gave also further security for their discretion; for they were oblig'd to make a confession to their *Priests* of all the most private actions of their Lives: so that by this means they became slaves to their *Priests*, that their own secrets might be kept.

It was upon this sort of confession that a *Lacedæmonian*, who was going to initiate himself into the mysteries of *Samothrace*, spoke roundly thus to the *Priest*: *If I have committed any crimes, surely the Gods are not ignorant of 'em.*

Another answer'd almost after the same manner: *Is it to you or to* God *we ought to confess our Crimes? It is to* God, says the Priest. *Well then, retire thou*, answered the *Lacedæmonian*, *and I'll confess 'em to* God. These *Lacedæmonians* were not very full of the Spirit of Devotion, and I do not doubt but there might have been some Man Wicked enough to go and make a false confession, to get himself initiated into their mysteries,

ries, and then afterwards to make a discovery of all their Extravagancies, and publish the Cheats of the *Priests*.

I believe that this Misfortune may have happened, for though Priests used all possible means to prevent such Discoveries: They observed narrowly what Persons they were, with whom they had to do; and, I'll warrant you, the two *Lacedæmonians*, whom we have mentioned, were not admitted. Besides, they declared the *Epicureans*, incapable of being initiated into their Mysteries, because they were a sort of Men, who made it their Business to laugh at them; and I believe, they never delivered *Oracles* to them: Nor was it very difficult to know them; for all those among the *Greeks*, who applied themselves to Literature, made choice of some Sect of *Philosophy*, or other, and took their Appellation from that Sect, almost as we do from a Country. For Example, there were three *Demetriuses*, which were thus distinguished; one was *Demetri-*

us the *Cynick*, the other, *Demetrius* the *Stoick*, and the third, *Demetrius* the *Peripatetick*. This Custom of excluding the *Epicureans* from all Mysteries, was so general, and so necessary for the securing of Sacred things, that it was made use of by that Grand Cheat, whose Life *Lucian* describes so agreeably; I mean that *Alexander*, who fooled the *Greeks* so long a time with his *Serpents*: But he also added the *Christians* to the *Epicureans*; for he thought one no better than the other: And before he began his Ceremonies, he always cried, *Let the* Christians *be put out.* To whom the People answered in a kind of *Chorus*, *Let the* Epicureans *be put out also.* Nay, he did far worse than all this; for seeing himself tormented by these two sorts of People, (who, tho pushed by different Interests, yet conspired together to turn his Ceremonies into Ridicule) he declared that *Pontus* (where he then lived) was filled with wicked People, and that the God, whose Prophet he was, would speak no more, if they did not

not rid themſelves of them; and upon this, they murdered all the *Epicureans* and the *Chriſtians*.

Daphnean Apollo, in the Suburbs of *Antioch*, was in the ſame uneaſineſs, when in the time of *Julian* the Apoſtate, he anſwered all thoſe, who asked him the Cauſe of his ſilence, that they muſt lay the blame on certain dead People, who were interred in the Neighbour-hood. Theſe dead People were Chriſtian Martyrs, and amongſt the reſt, St. *Babilas*. Now the current Opinion is, that it was the Preſence of theſe bleſſed dead Bodies, which deprived the *Dæmons* of the Power of ſpeaking in the *Oracle*; but 'tis more probable, that the great Concourſe of Chriſtians, which daily viſited the Sepulchers of theſe Martyrs, incommoded the *Prieſts* of *Apollo*, who did not care, that ſuch clear-ſighted Enemies ſhould be Witneſſes of their Actions; and therefore they endeavoured by this falſe *Oracle*, to obtain of the *Pagan Emperor*, that he would cauſe theſe Bo-

dies, of which the God complained, to be cast out from thence.

But let us return to the Artifices of the *Priests*, of which the *Oracles* are full: And to comprehend in one Reflection alone, all those that can be made upon them, I would fain have some one tell me, why the *Dæmons* could not predict what was to come, unless they were in holes, in Caverns and in obscure Places? And why they did never animate a Statue, in some common Road, where four high Ways met, exposed on all sides to the view of the World? But it may perhaps be said, that those *Oracles* which were given in answer to sealed Letters, and those that were delivered by Dreams, could not have been without *Dæmons*; but 'twill be very easie for us to show, that they had nothing in them more wonderful and miraculous than the rest.

CHAP.

CHAP. XIV.

Of Oracles *that were delivered in Answer to Sealed Letters.*

THe *Priests* were not so scrupulous in that Point, as not to unseal the Letters that were brought them. The Custom was to lay them upon the Altar: After which the Temple was to be shut; but the *Priests* knew very well how to enter, without being perceived. Or else, they put the Letters into the Hands of the *Priests*, that they might sleep upon them, and receive in a Dream the Answer, which they were to return: And in both Cases, they had the Leisure to open them privately. For the doing this, they had many secret Arts: Some of which we see practised by the false *Prophet* of *Lucian*. And they are to be seen in *Lucian* himself by any one, that has the Curiosity to know

how the Letters of the Ancients were to be opened, without its being perceived that they were so.

Certainly, they made use of some of these Secrets, to open those Letters, that the *Governour* of *Cilicia* (of whom *Plutarch* speaks) had sent to the *Oracle* of *Mopsus*, which was at *Mallus*, a City of that Province. The *Governour* knew not what to think of the Gods; for he was possessed by the *Epicureans* with many doubts, which they had put into his Head: So that, he was resolved, as *Plutarch* pleasantly observes, to send a spy among the Deities, to learn what he could of them: So he gave him a Letter very carefully sealed, to carry to the *Oracle* of *Mopsus*. This Envoy came, and, as the Custom was, laid his Letter upon the Altar, and himself slept in the Temple, where he saw in a *Dream*, a Man, very well made, who said to him, *Black*. He carried back this Answer to the *Governor* with his Letter sealed just as he sent it, to all Appearance. The Answer seemed very ridiculous

diculous to the *Epicureans*, that were at Court; but himself was struck with Astonishment and Wonder at it; and opening his Letter before them, he showed them what he had written; which was this Question: *Shall I sacrifice to you a white or a black Bullock?* After this Miracle, he was all his Life very much devoted to the *God Mopsus*. We will hereafter discover to you the Mystery of the *Dream*; but it is sufficient at present to tell you, that there is no doubt, but that the Letters were opened and sealed again with great Dexterity and Address; for what necessity was there of sending a Letter to the *Temple*, if a *Dæmon* was to make the Answer? And if it sometimes happened so, that the *Priests* durst not venture to open the Letters, then they endeavoured by their Cunning, to discover what Men came to the *Oracle* about; for they were commonly Persons of Note, and who had some Design or Passion in their Heads, that was not unknown to the World. And the Priests

Prieſts had ſo much Converſation with thoſe that came to conſult, either at their *Sacrifices*, or during the delays, that were made by the *Oracle*, before it would anſwer, that it was not difficult to draw from their own Mouths (or at leaſt to conjecture) what was the Cauſe of their Voyage: They made them offer one Sacrifice after another, till they had gotten ſome Light into their Affairs: They put them alſo into the Hands of certain little Officers of the *Temple*, who, (under pretence of ſhowing them the Antiquities, the Statues, the Paintings, and the Offerings,) managed the matter ſo well, as to pump many things out of them concerning the Buſineſs which they came about. Theſe Antiquaries (like thoſe who live upon this Trade now in *Italy*) were in all the *Temples* that were any thing conſiderable. They knew by Heart all the Miracles that were done, they ſet forth to you the Power and Wonders of their *God*, and they recounted to you a long Story of every Preſent that was conſecrated to him.

him. And therefore, *Lucian* says very pleasantly, that all this sort of Men lived and subsisted on Fables; and that in *Greece*, they would have been very angry to have been told truth, tho' it had cost them nothing. If those who came to consult the *Oracle*, would not tell all themselves, yet their Servants could not hold their Peace. You must know, that in an *Oracle*-Town, there were scarce any Persons but *Oracle*-Officers: Some were *Prophets* and *Priests*; others, *Poets* (who put into Verse the *Oracles*, which were delivered in Prose;) others, simple *Interpreters*; others, little *Sacrificers*, who killed the Victims, and examined their Intrails; others, sellers of Perfumes and Incense, or of Beasts for the *Sacrifices*; others, Antiquaries; and in fine, all the rest were but In-keepers, whom the great resort of Strangers inriched. Now all these People were for the Interest of the *Oracle* and the *God*: And if by the means of the Servants belonging to these Strangers, they discovered any thing worth the knowing,

ing, you need not doubt, but they ſoon advertized the *Prieſts* of it.

The falſe *Prophet*, *Alexander*, who had ſet up his *Oracle* in *Pontus*, had Correſpondents even in *Rome* it ſelf, who ſent him an Account of the moſt ſecret Affairs of thoſe who went to conſult him; by this means he could anſwer without the trick of opening their Letters. And theſe Correſpondencies were doubtleſs not unknown to the *Prieſts* of *Apollo* of *Claros*, if it be true, that it was ſufficient only to tell them the Names of thoſe that conſulted them. *Tacitus* ſpeaks thus of them in his ſecond Book of Annals. Germanicus *went to conſult* Apollo *of* Claros, *where a Woman does not deliver the* Oracles, *as at* Delphos; *but a Man choſen out of certain Families and who is almoſt always of* Miletus; *you need tell him only the Number and Names of them that come to conſult him; and then he retires into a Grotto, and having taken ſome Water from a certain ſecret Fountain there, he anſwers you in Verſe, to whatever*

you

you have in your thoughts, though for the most part, he is a very ignorant Fellow.

Here we may observe, that the *Oracle* of *Delphos* was committed to the management of a Woman, because she had nothing else to do there, but to make ridiculous and antick Gestures, and to act the being possessed and inspired; but because that of *Claros* had more difficulty in it, therefore a Man only was to be intrusted with it. We may further remark, that the Ignorance of the Prophet, (which was indeed the greatest Wonder of the *Oracle*,) could not be very easily discovered; for the *Dæmon* of the *Oracle*, as much a *Dæmon* as he was, laid it down for an indispensable Rule, that they must bring him the Names of those who consulted him. But we are not come to that yet; it is sufficient to have shown how they could answer, not only to seal'd Letters, but also to simple thoughts. It is true, they could not answer to the thoughts of all the World: For what the *Priest* of *Claros*

ros did for *Germanicus*, he could not do for a private Citizen of *Rome*.

CHAP. XV.

Of Oracles *delivered in Dreams.*

THE Number of *Oracles* delivered in Dreams is very great; for this way had more of Wonder in it than any other, and yet was not very difficult in the Practice. The most famous of all these *Oracles* was that of *Trophonius* in *Bœotia*. *Trophonius* was but a simple *Hero*, but his *Oracle* was delivered with more Ceremony than those of any *God*.

Pausanias himself, who had been to consult it, and who had pass'd through all its Ceremonies, has left us a very ample Description of it: And I believe, that an exact Abridgment of his Relation will not be disagreeable to the Reader.

Before

Before any Body descended into the *Den* of *Trophonius*, they were obliged to pass a certain number of days in a kind of little *Temple* or *Chapel* call'd the *Chapel* of good Fortune, and of the good *Genius*. During this time they used expiations of all sorts; they abstain'd from hot bathings; they wash'd themselves very often in the River *Hercynas*; they sacrific'd to *Trophonius* and all his family, to *Apollo*, to *Jupiter*, surnam'd the King, to *Saturn*, to *Juno*, to one *Ceres Europa* who had been Nurse to *Trophonius*; and they lived only upon the flesh of the Sacrifices. It is also more than probable that the *Priests* liv'd upon nothing else. The Entrails of all these victims were to be examined, to see if *Trophonius* thought fit that the consulters should descend into his *Den*; but if these had yielded all the most happy Omens in the World, yet it would not do; for the decisive entrails were those of a certain *Ram*, which was to be Sacrific'd last; and if they were favourable, then the consulters were led in the Night to the

the River *Hercynas*, where two young Lads about thirteen or fourteen years Old rubbed all their Bodies over with Oil; then they conducted them to the Source of the River, and there they made them drink of two sorts of Waters; those of *Lethe*, which effaced out of their Minds all the prophane thoughts which before possess'd 'em; and those of *Mnemosyne*, which had the virtue to make them remember whatsoever they should see in the Sacred *Den*. After all these preparatives, they were show'd the Statue of *Trophonius*, to which they made their Prayers; and then they were covered with linen vests, which were girt about them with certain Sacred *Bandlets*, and so at last they were admitted to the *Oracle*.

The *Oracle* stood upon a Mountain and was encompassed with a Wall of white Stones, upon which Obelisks of Brass were erected: within this Cercle was a Cavern of the figure of an Oven, cut out by Art, whose entrance was so strait, that Men

Men did not descend into it by Stairs but by little Ladders, and when they were come to the bottom, they found another little Cavern, whose entrance was yet streighter: Here they laid themselves down upon the Earth and took into each hand certain compositions of Honey which they were obliged to carry, and then they put their feet within the opening of the little Cavern, and immediately they perceived themselves pulled into it with much force and suddenness.

Then it was that things to come were declared to 'em; but not to all in the same manner; for some heard and did not see, and those that saw were not to hear. After this they came out of the *Den*, creeping upon the Earth, as they entered in, with their feet foremost. Immediately they were put into the Chair of *Mnemosyne*, where they were asked what they had seen or heard; thence they were led into the *Chapel* of the good *Genius*, being still quite amaz'd and out of their Wits; but re-

trieving their ſenſes by little and little, they began to be able to laugh; for till then the grandeur of the Myſteries, and the Divinity with which they were filled, had prevented it; though for my part I think one may well wonder how they could refrain ſo long.

Pauſanias tells us that there was one Man who enter'd into the *Den* of *Trophonius* and never came out again: This was a certain Spy that *Demetrius* ſent thither, to ſee if there were any thing in that Holy Place, worth the plundering. The Body of this unhappy Man was afterwards found a far off from thence; for 'tis to be ſuppos'd that he was caſt out of the Sacred *Den* by ſome more ſecret way than he enter'd into it.

It is very eaſy for us to make reflections upon all this; for what leiſure and opportunity could the *Prieſts* want during all the Sacrifices which they obliged Men to make, to qualify them for the entrance into this Sacred *Den*? For certainly *Trophonius* knew how to chooſe his Men,

and

and would not receive every Body. How did all those Washings, Expiations, and Night-watchings, and these passages into their strait and obscure Caverns, fill Mens minds with superstition, dread and fear? How many Machines were at work in those dark places? The History of the Spy of *Demetrius* assures us, that there was no security in the *Den* for those who came thither with malicious intentions; and that besides the Sacred passage into it, which was known to all the World, the *Den* had another secret one, which was known only to the *Priests*. When Men were drawn in by their feet, it was doubtless done by Cords, (tho' not perceiv'd:) for they could not put their hands to feel what it was that drew 'em, because they were embaras's'd with those compositions of Honey, which they were oblig'd not to let go. And perhaps those Caverns were full of Perfumes and Odours which stupefied the brain: and the Waters of *Lethe* and *Mnemosyne* were, also ('tis probable) prepar'd

for the same effect. To say nothing of the frightful sights and the noises which they might be terrified with-al; and when they came out from thence little better than distracted, they talk'd strangely of what they had seen or heard; so that People taking advantage of their disorder, might collect what they pleas'd, and Change it as they thought fitting, and in fine, interpret it as they listed themselves.

Add to all this, that there were some of those *Oracles* which were deliver'd in Dreams, where one must prepare ones self by fasting, as that of *Amphiaraus* in *Attica*; and then if your Dream could not receive a clear interpretation, they made you sleep again in the *Temple*, (at fresh charges) and never fail'd to fill your Head with fancies fit to make you Dream of Gods and extraordinary things: And for the most part, you were to sleep upon the skins of Victims, which perhaps were rubb'd with a drug which had some odd effect on the Brain.

*Philostratus *Li.* 2. *Life of* Apollonius.

But

But when it was the Prieſts who ſleeping upon the ſealed Letters, had themſelves the Prophetick Dreams, you may eaſily imagine, that thoſe Dreams were not very difficult to unfold.

Indeed the care, that the *Pagan Prieſts* took to hide their Impoſtures, ſeems to have been greater than it needed to have been; for if People were credulous and ſtupid enough to content themſelves with the Dreams of *the Prieſts*, and to give credit to them, then there was no neceſſity, to ſuffer them to dream in the Temples: And the *Prieſts* might have reſerved this Privilege to themſelves alone, without any Contradiction. For conſidering what ſort of People they were, whom they had to do withal, it was too much Honour for them, to be cheated with Precaution and Addreſs.

There was in *Achaia* * an *Oracle* of *Mercury*, which was delivered in this manner: After many Ceremonies, they whiſpered the God in the Ear, and asked him what Queſtion

* *Pauſanias.*

they pleas'd, and afterwards they ſtopt their own ears with their hands, and the firſt words which they heard after they were come out of the *Temple*, was taken to be the anſwer of the *God*. And to the end that the *Prieſts* might the more eaſily cauſe them to hear what they pleas'd, and the impoſture not be diſcover'd, this *Oracle* was alwaies to be conſulted in the night.

CHAP. XVI.

Of the Ambiguity of Oracles.

ONe of the greateſt ſecrets of the *Oracles*, and one of the things which moſt of all aſſures us that they were managed by Men, is their Ambiguity, and the Art that was uſed to contrive ſuch anſwers as would be ſuitable to any event that was likely to happen.

Arian. Lib. 7. * When *Alexander* fell ſick all of a ſudden

ſudden at *Babylon*, ſome of the Principal of his court went to paſs a Night in the *Temple* of *Serapis*, to inquire of that *God*, if it were not fit for 'em to bring their King thither to be cured by him. The *God* anſwer'd, that it was better for him to remain where he was. *Serapis* had reaſon; for if he had adviſed the bringing *Alexander* thither, and he had died by the way, or in the *Temple* it ſelf, what would they not have ſaid? But if the King continued at *Babylon* and recover'd his Health there, what a mighty Glory would it have brought the *Oracle*? and if he Died, it might be ſaid to be the beſt that could befall him after the conqueſts that he had made, which if he lived, he could neither augment nor preſerve. And without doubt this laſt interpretation was made for the honour of *Serapis*, after *Alexander* was Dead.

Macrobius ſaies, that when *Trajan* had a Deſign of attacking the *Parthians*, he was deſired to conſult the *Oracle* of the City *Heliopolis* about it, whither the manner was only to

ſend a ſealed Letter. Now, though *Trajan* put no great Confidence in *Oracles*, yet he ſent a ſealed Letter thither, in which there was nothing written, and they ſent him back a ſuitable Anſwer, that is, none at all. So that *Trajan* being now convinced of the Divinity of *Oracles*, ſends another ſealed Letter, in which he demands of the God, whether he ſhould finiſh the War, that he had undertaken, and return to *Rome*, or not? The God ordered, that they ſhould take a Vine, which was one of the Offerings of the *Temple*, and cut it in pieces, and ſo carry it to *Trajan*. The Event, ſays *Macrobius*, was conformable to the *Oracle*; for *Trajan* dying in this War, his Bones, which were repreſented by the broken Vine, were carried to *Rome*.

All the World knew for certain that the *Emperor* deſigned to make War with the *Parthians*, and that this was the Buſineſs about which he conſulted the *Oracle*: And, the *Oracle* was ſo cunning, as to return him an *Allegorical* Anſwer, and ſo general

general an one, that it could not fail of being true. For if *Trajan* had returned to *Rome*, either Victorious, but hurt, or having lost some part of his Souldiers; or if he were overcome, and his Army put to Flight; or if any division had been amongst his Men; or if any Mutiny had happened amongst the *Parthians*; or if any had happened at *Rome* in the Absence of the *Emperor*; if the *Parthians* had been wholly conquered; or if they had been but partly worsted, or that they had been abandoned by some of their Allies, in any one of these cases, this broken Vine miraculously had foretold all: And there was no question, but some one of these would happen. And I believe the Bones of the *Emperor* that were carried to *Rome*, and by which they explained the *Oracle*, were, for all that, the only thing of which the *Oracle* never thought.

This Vine puts me in mind of a kind of *Oracle* that accommodated it self to every thing, of which, as *Apuleius* tells us, the Priests of the *Goddess*

Goddess of *Syria* were the Inventors. They made two Verses, the Sence whereof was this:

Two Oxen yok'd together cut the Earth,
And make the Fields produce a fruitful Birth.

Now there was no Question, which they could not answer with these two Verses. For if they were consulted upon a Marriage, it was the same thing, *Oxen yoked together, and a fruitful Birth.* If they were consulted about the Purchace of any Land, again, it was *yoked Oxen, and fruitful Fields.* If about a Journey; *the Oxen yoked together,* and so ready to go forth, *and the fruitful Fields* promised a great Profit or Success by the Journey. If one went to War, *these Oxen under the Yoke,* do clearly signifie, that you shall put your Enemies under the Yoke. Certainly, this *Goddess of Syria* did not love much tatling, and had found out the true secret to satisfie all

Questions

Questions with one single Answer.

Those, who received these ambiguous *Oracles*, took the pains very willingly to justifie them, by adjusting the Success and the Prediction together. And often-times, that which had but one Sence (in the Intention of those who delivered the *Oracle*,) was after the event, found to have two. For the Impostors might be secure, that their Honour would be preserved with all the Care imaginable by those very Persons whom they abused. Thus, when the false Prophet *Alexander* was asked by *Rutilianus*, what Masters he should provide for his Son; he answered, that he should let him have *Pythagoras*, and *Homer*. *Rutilianus* took it in the plain sence, that he should study Philosophy and Humanity. But the young Man dying within a few days after, they represented to *Rutilianus*, that the Prophet was very much mistaken: But *Rutilianus* found out (with a very great deal of Subtilty) that the Death

Death of his Son was foretold by the *Oracle*, becauſe it appointed a *Pythagoras* and *Homer*, two dead Men, for his Tutors.

CHAP. XVII.

The Cheats of the Oracles *manifeſtly diſcovered.*

BUT there is now no need of being any further ſolicitous to detect the cunning of the Prieſts, by Subtilties ſpun almoſt as finely as their own; for they were fully and clearly diſcovered to the Eyes of the whole World, when the true Religion triumphed entirely over *Paganiſm*, under the Chriſtian Emperors.

Theodoret, ſays, that *Theophilus, Biſhop of Alexandria*, ſhewed the Inhabitants of that Town, the hollow Statues, into which the Prieſts privately crept to deliver their *Oracles*.

When

When by the Order of *Constantine*, the Temple of *Æsculapius*, in *Cilicia*, was pluck'd down, *they chased thence*, (says *Eusebius*, in the Life of this Emperor,) *not a God, nor a* Dæmon, *but the Cheat, that had so long deluded the People.* He adds, that in general, in the demolished *Idols*, they found no Gods at all, nor *Dæmons*, nor so much as a melancholy Shade or obscure Specter; but only some *Hay*, *Straw*, or Ordures, or the Bones of dead Men. It is from him, that we learn the History of *Theotechnus*, who set up in the City of *Antioch*, the Statue of *Jupiter*, *God of Friendship*; which questionless was contrived to deliver *Oracles*, since *Eusebius* says, that there were *Prophets* belonging to this *God*. *Theotechnus*, upon this Account got so great Credit, that *Maximin* made him Governour of all the Province. But *Licinius* coming to *Antioch*, and suspecting the Imposture, caused the Priests and Prophets of this new *Jupiter*, to be tortured with the Rack; hereupon they confessed all, and both

both they and their Accomplices were put to a cruel Death, their Master *Theotechnus* suffering first. The same *Eusebius*, in the fourth Book of his *Evangelical Preparations*, says, that in his time, the most famous Prophets amongst the *Pagans*, and their most celebrated Divines, of whom some were *Magistrates* of their Cities, were compelled by Torments to discover the very particulars of all the Cheats of the *Oracles*. If we were now to make out what the old Christians believed of them, all these Passages of *Eusebius*, in my Opinion, would decide the Question. They admitted *Dæmons* indeed in a certain general System, which served for their Disputes; but when they came to particular matters of Fact, they spoke little of them, or rather directly denied them.

I cannot believe, that we need any better Witnesses against the *Dæmons*, than the *Pagan* Priests themselves, by whose Confessions, the thing seems to me to be clearly made out. I will only therefore add one Chapter about

about their *Lots*; not to discover the Imposture of them, for that is comprehended in what we have already said of *Oracles* in general; and besides it will be sufficiently apparent of its self; but that I may not omit a species of *Oracles* very famous in Antiquity.

CHAP. XVIII.

Of Lots.

Lots are the Effects of Chance, and, as it were, the *Oracles* of *Fortune*, by which she decides all things: And they are the Instruments we make use of, to know what this Decision is.

These *Lots* for the most part were a kind of *Dice*, whereon were ingraven certain Characters, or words, the Explication of which was to be sought for, in Tables made for that purpose. The manner of using these

Lots

Lots was various: In ſome Temples they caſt them out of their Hands, in others they threw them out of an *Urn*; from whence comes this Proverb ſo common with the *Greeks*, *the Lot is caſt*.

This Game of Chance was always uſhered in by Sacrifices, and abundance of Ceremonies. The Prieſt, as 'tis probable, knew how to *manage the Dice*; but if they would not take that pains, they might e'en let 'em run as they would, ſince they were always Maſters of the Explanation.

*Cicero de Divin. lib. 1.

* The *Lacedæmonians* went one day to conſult the *Lots* of *Dodona*, upon a War that they were undertaking; for beſides the ſpeaking *Oaks*, the *Doves*, the *Baſons*, and the *Oracles*, there were alſo *Lots* of *Dodona*. After the Ceremonies were paſt, juſt as they were going to caſt the *Lots*, with a great deal of Reſpect and Veneration, a *Monkey* of the King of the *Moloſſi*, being got into the Temple, threw down the *Lots* and the *Urn*; upon this the frighted *Prieſteſs* told the *Lacedæmonians*, that

that they ought not to think of conquering, but only how to save themselves. And all the Writers assure us, that the *Lacedæmonians* never received a more unlucky Presage.

The most famous *Lots* of all, were those of *Prænestе* and *Antium*, two little Towns in *Italy*. At *Antium*, there were wonderful *Statues* that moved of themselves, (according to the Testimony of *Macrobius*, *Book* 1. *Chap.* 23.) whose different Motions, either served for Answers, or declared whether it was fitting to consult the *Lots*, or not.

And there is a Passage in *Cicero*'s Second Book of *Divination*, which tells us, that they consulted the *Lots* of *Prænestе*, with the Consent of *Fortune*; which implies that the Statue of *Fortune* could nod with its Head, or give some other Signs of its will and Pleasure.

We find also, that there were other Statues, which had this very same Faculty. *Diodorus Siculus* and *Quintus Curtius* say, that *Jupiter Hammon* was carried by four-score

Priests, in a kind of golden Chair of State, covered with a rich Canopy, from which hung abundance of silver Cups that made a jangling noise, and that he was followed by a great Number of Women and Maids, who sung Hymns in the Language of their Country; And that this God, by some Motions or Signs that he made, instructed the Priests that carried him, which way he would have them go.

The God of *Heliopolis* in *Syria*, according to *Macrobius*, did as much: All the difference was, that he would be carried by Men of the best Quality in the Province, and such as had a long time liv'd in perfect continence, and had their Heads shaved.

Lucian, in his Treatise of the *Goddess* of *Syria*, says, that he once saw a much more miraculous sort of *Apollo*, who, being carried on the shoulders of his *Priests*, took a fancy to leave them in the lurch below on the Earth, and to take a Walk by himself in the Skies. And that all this should be done in the sight of such

a

a kind of Man as *Lucian*, is no small Wonder.

But I am so tired with discovering the Cheats of these *Pagan* Priests, (and am perswaded, my Reader is as weary of it as I am my self) that I will not spend any time in considering how it was, that they made their Puppets dance, and play'd all their juggling tricks.

In the *East*, the *Lots* were Arrows, and to this day the *Turks* and *Arabians* make use of them in the same manner. The Prophet *Ezekiel* says, that *Nebucadonosor* mingled his Arrows against *Ammon* and *Hierusalem*, and the predicting Arrow flew towards *Hierusalem*; which decided the Question, against which People he should make War.

In *Greece* and *Italy*, they often drew the *Lot* from some famous Poet, as *Homer* or *Euripides*: And what first presented it self at the opening of the Book, was looked upon to be the Decree of *Heaven*. And History furnishes us with a thousand Examples of this kind.

'Tis evident, that about two hundred Years after the Death of *Virgil*, they set a great Value on his Verses, and began to believe them prophetick, and to use them in stead of the ancient *Lots* of *Præneste*. * *Alexander Severus*, in particular, (at a time, when *Heliogabalus* was not much his Friend) received this Answer in the Temple of *Præneste* out of *Virgil*.

* Lampridius.

——*Si qua fatà aspera rumpas,*
Tu Marcellus eris.

If you can vanquish Destiny,
The Great Marcellus *you shall be.*

Here my Author remembers, that *Rabelais* mentions the *Virgilian Lot*, which *Panurge* consulted concerning his Marriage: And he judges that Place of the Book, as learned, as 'tis agreeable and full of fancy; he says that the Whimsies and Follies of *Rabelais* are many times more to be esteemed, than the most serious Discourses of others. I would not forget

forget this *Elogy*, because 'tis a thing very singular to meet with, in the midst of a *Treatise* of *Oracles* that is full of knowledge and erudition. 'Tis certain that *Rabelais* had a great deal of Wit and reading, and a particular Art of writing of Learned things in a frolick and jesting way, and of relating a thousand Ridiculous and fantastical stories without being tiresome to his Reader. And 'tis a misfortune that he liv'd not in an Age that would have oblig'd him to a Style more Gentleman like and inoffensive.

These lots were afterwards in use amongst *Christians*; who consulted the Holy Scriptures for that purpose, as the *Pagans* did their *Poets*. Saint *Augustin*, in his 119 *Epistle* to *Januarius*, appears not wholly to disapprove it, unless it be done for some wicked or vain end. *Gregory* of *Tours* tells us himself what his practice was: He pass'd seven days in Fasting and Prayer, afterwards he went to the *Tomb* of Saint *Martin*, where he opened some Book of the Scripture as his fancy led him, and took

for the answer of *God*, the first passage which offer'd its self to his view; and if this passage made nothing for his purpose, then he opened the *Bible* in another place.

Others took the first thing they heard sung when they enter'd into the Church, for a Divine presage.

But who would believe that the Emperor * *Heraclius*, deliberating in what place he should Winter his Army, should determine it by this kind of Lot? He purify'd his Army during three days, and afterwards open'd the Book of the *Evangelists*, and there found that *Albany* was mark'd out for his Winter quarters. Was that an affair of which a Man could reasonably hope for a decision in the Scriptures?

*Cedrenus.

At last indeed the Church has quite banished this superstition, but it took up a great deal of time first: For when once our minds are possess'd with an error, 'tis a wonder if ever we will be undeceiv'd.

The end of the first Discourse.

THE

THE SECOND DISCOURSE.

That Oracles *did not ceaſe at the coming of* Jeſus Chriſt.

THE greateſt difficulty that regards *Oracles* is now ſurmounted, ſince we have proved that *Dæmons* were not at all concerned in them. And if this be true, then *Oracles* ſignify ſo little to the *Chriſtian Religion*, that there will be no neceſſity to maintain, that they ceaſed preciſely at the coming of *Jeſus Chriſt*.

CHAP. I.

The weakneſs of thoſe reaſons upon which the opinion, that Oracles *ceaſed at the coming of* Jeſus Chriſt, *is founded.*

THat which made moſt Men believe that *Oracles* ceas'd at the coming of *Jeſus Chriſt*, was the prediction of *Oracles* themſelves, which foretold their own ſilence, and the confeſſion of the Heathens that liv'd about the time of *Jeſus-Chriſt*, who often ſpeak of their ceſſation.

We have already ſhown the falſity of theſe pretended *Oracles*, in which a *Dæmon* that was ſtruck dumb, ſaid himſelf that he was ſtruck dumb; but theſe *Dæmons* were either feign'd by the over great Zeal of the *Chriſtians*, or too eaſily receiv'd by their credulity.

I will recite one of thoſe *Oracles* upon

upon which *Eusebius* supports his opinion, that they did cease at the Birth of *Jesus Christ*. 'Tis taken from *Porphyrius*; and *Eusebius* never fails of making all the advantage he can of the testimony of this Enemy.

I will declare to you the truth concerning the Oracles *of* Delphos *and* Claros, (said Apollo *to his* Priests,) *In times past there came from the Bosom of the* Earth *an infinity of* Oracles *and Fountains, and Exhalations, which inspir'd People with Divine furies; but the* Earth *by the continual changes which time makes in it, has reimbibed and caus'd to enter into its self, all those Fountains, Exhalations and* Oracles: *and there remains now no more but the Waters of* Mycale *in the* Didymean *fields, and the* Oracles *of* Claros, *and* Parnassus.

Upon this, *Eusebius* concludes in general that all *Oracles* were then come to an end.

But 'tis certain that three of 'em at least are to be excepted, according to

to this *Oracle* which he reports himself: But he takes notice only of those words that make for his purpose, and troubles not himself with the rest.

But besides, does this *Oracle* of *Porphyrius* tell us, when the other *Oracles* ceas'd? not at all; tho' *Eusebius* will by all means have it understood to be at the time of the coming of *Jesus Christ*. We may commend his zeal, but his manner of arguing does not at all deserve our Praise.

Nay suppose that *Porphyrius*'s *Oracle* did speak of the coming of *Jesus Christ*, would it follow therefore that all *Oracles* then ceas'd, and that none remain'd? *Eusebius* perhaps imagin'd that this exception signified little, and that it is sufficient if the greatest part of the *Oracles* did then cease; but he is mistaken, for if *Oracles* had been deliver'd by *Dæmons*, who by the birth of *Jesus Christ* were condemn'd to eternal silence, then no *Dæmon* would have been excepted, or privileged. So that if there was but one *Dæmon* remaining after the

the Birth of *Jeſus Chriſt*, it would be ſufficient to prove that it was not *His Birth* that impoſed a perpetual ſilence upon *Oracles*. This is one of thoſe caſes, where the leaſt exception ruins the general propoſition.

But you may ſay perhaps, that *Dæmons* at the Birth of *Jeſus Chriſt* did ceaſe to deliver *Oracles*; but that yet *Oracles* continued ſtill for all that, becauſe the *Prieſts* counterfeited them.

This ſuppoſition is without any foundation; for I can prove that *Oracles* continued four hundred years after the Death of *Chriſt*, and there is no mention any where made of the leaſt difference obſerv'd between thoſe that were delivered after the Birth of *Jeſus*, and thoſe that were pronounced before it. And beſides, if the *Prieſts* could ſo dextrouſly put the cheat upon People during the ſpace of four hundred years, why could they not continue to do it longer?

Of all the *Pagan* Authors that are in requeſt with thoſe who would make us believe that *Oracles* ceas'd at the

the coming of *Jesus Christ*, *Plutarch* is the chief: He lived some hundreds of years after *Christ*, and has written a *Dialogue* concerning the cessation of *Oracles*. Many Men upon his Authority only, have taken up their opinions, and espoused their party; and yet *Plutarch* positively excepts the *Oracle* of *Libadia*, (that is to say, of *Trophonius*) and that of *Delphos*: where, as he says, Anciently there was imployment enough for two *Priests*, and sometimes for three, but in his daies one served the turn.

Besides, he confesses that the *Oracles* were fallen to decay in *Bœotia*, a Country, which had formerly been famous for producing a great number of them.

All this, 'tis true, proves the cessation of some *Oracles*, and the diminution of the credit of others; but not the intire cessation of all, which however there is an absolute necessity for those to prove, who maintain the common opinion.

The *Oracle* of *Delphos* was not so

ſo mightily decay'd in *Plutarch*'s time; for he himſelf tells us in another *Treatiſe*, that the *Temple* of *Delphos* was then far more magnificent than ever it had been; that they had repaired the Ancient Buildings which time began to ruin, and that they had added others to it, which were altogether after the Modern mode; that there was a ſmall *Town* near *Delphos*, which increas'd daily by little and little, and had its nouriſhment from the old City, like a little Tree that ſprings from the foot of a great one; and that this little Town was become more conſiderable than it had been for a thouſand years paſt. But even in this *Dialogue*, which treats of the ceſſation of *Oracles*, *Demetrius* the *Cilician*, one of the interlocutors, ſays, that before he began his Voyage, the *Oracles* of *Amphilochus* and *Mopſus* were as flouriſhing as ever; but that ſince he came from thence he knew not how things ſtood with 'em. You ſee then what is to be found in favour of the *ceſſation of Oracles* at the

the coming of *Christ* in this Treatise of *Plutarch*, to which a Multitude of Learned Men referr you for the Proof of *it*.

Here my Author pretends, that we are also fallen into a gross mistake, concerning a Passage in the second Book of *Divinations*: Where *Cicero* laughs at the *Oracle*, that was delivered by *Apollo* in *Latin* to *Pyrrhus*, who consulted him concerning the War, he was going to make against the *Romans*. This *Oracle* had a double meaning, so that it could not be understood, whether *Pyrrhus* should overcome the *Romans*, or the *Romans* overcome *Pyrrhus*. The Equivocation is so peculiar to the *Latin* Phrase, that one cannot well render it into *English*; for my part, I cannot translate it better than thus:

I do pronounce that Rome
Pyrrhus *shall overcome.*

But the Words of *Cicero*, concerning this *Oracle*, are these that follow.

In

In the first Place, (says he,) Apollo *never spoke* Latin; *in the second Place, the* Greeks *knew nothing of this* Oracle; *thirdly,* Apollo *in the time of* Pyrrhus *had left off Rhiming; in fine, although the* Æacides (*from which Family* Pyrrhus *was descended,*) *were far from being Men of a fine Judgment, or of a Piercing Wit, yet the Equivocation of the* Oracle *was so manifest, that* Pyrrhus *could not chuse but perceive it. But why is it so long since any* Oracles *were delivered in this kind at* Delphos? *For this Reason it is, that now adays nothing is more despised than they are.*

It is on these last words, that the Opinion is grounded, that *Oracles* were not delivered at *Delphos* in the time of *Cicero.*

But my Author says, that they are deceived, who think so, and that these Words, *Why are there no more* Oracles *delivered in this kind at* Delphos? Plainly shew, that *Cicero* speaks only of *Oracles* in Verse: Since he is discoursing in that Place about one wrapp'd up in an *Hexameter.*

But

But I know not whether we ought to be altogether of my Author's Opinion; for obſerve how *Cicero* goes on. *When the Defenders of* Oracles *are hard put to it; they anſwer, that this Virtue in the Exhalation of the Earth, which inſpired the* Pythian *Prieſteſs, is evaporated with length of time. One would think that they were talking of ſome Wine that was grown flat, and that had loſt its Spirits; for what time can conſume, or dry up a Vertue all Divine? And what can be more Divine than an Exhalation from the Earth, which works ſuch an Effect upon the Soul, as to give it both the Knowledge of Futurity, and the Power to expreſs its ſelf in Verſe.*

It ſeems to me, that *Cicero* means, that the whole Virtue was intirely loſt: Whereas he would have acknowledged, that a good part of it had remained, if *Oracles* were ſtill delivered at *Delphos*, though but in Proſe. For no Man will ſay, that a Prophecy is nothing at all, unleſs it be in Verſe?

I do not think, that they are ſo mightily miſtaken, who take this Paſſage for an abſolute Proof of the entire Ceſſation of *Oracles* at *Delphos*; but they do ill, who pretend to draw any Argument from thence, for attributing this Ceſſation to the Birth of *Jeſus Chriſt*. For the *Oracle* ceaſed too ſoon for that, ſince it appears by this very Paſſage, that it ceaſed a long time before *Cicero*.

But for all this, the thing was not in Truth, as *Cicero* ſeems to underſtand it in this Place. For he himſelf, in his Firſt Book of *Divinations*, makes his Brother *Quintus*, who ſtands up for *Oracles*, to ſpeak in this manner. *I relie upon this Point, that the* Oracle *of* Delphos *had never been ſo famous, and had never received ſo many offerings from Kings and all ſorts of People, if the Truth of its Predictions had not been acknowledged. Now indeed it is not ſo famous, becauſe its Predictions are leſs true: And ſo, on the other ſide, if they had not been once extremely true, it would never have been ſo mighty famous*

heretofore *as it was*. But (which is yet a ſtronger Proof) *Cicero* himſelf (as *Plutarch* relates in his Life) did in his Youth conſult the *Oracle* of *Delphos*, concerning the Conduct he ought to keep in the World: and 'twas anſwered him, that he ſhould follow his *Genius*, rather than conform himſelf to the Opinion of the Vulgar. Now if it were not true, that *Cicero* conſulted the *Oracle* of *Delphos*, yet, at leaſt, this Story obliges us to grant, that in the time of *Cicero*, it was conſulted.

CHAP.

CHAP. II.

Why the Ancient Authors contradicted each other, very often, about the time of the Ceſſation of Oracles.

PErhaps, it may be objected, How comes it to paſs then, that in the fifth Book of *Lucan's Pharſalia*, we find this Account of the *Oracle* of *Delphos*? *The* Oracle *of* Delphos, *which has been ſilent ever ſince Great Men were afraid of what was to come to paſs, and forbid that the Gods ſhould declare it, is the moſt conſiderable of all thoſe Favours of Heaven, which our Age has loſt.* And a little after, Appius, *who was deſirous to know the Deſtiny of* Italy, *had the Boldneſs, to go and interrogate this Cavern, that had been mute ſo long; and to move the* Tripos, *that had been ſo long undiſturbed.* And that *Juvenal* ſays in a cer-

tain Place, *Since the* Oracles *ſpeak no more at* Delphos——

In fine, whence comes it, that among the Authors of the ſame Age, we find ſome, who ſay, the *Oracle* of *Delphos* ſpeaks no more, and others that ſay, he ſpeaks ſtill? And whence comes it, that the ſame Author ſometimes contradicts himſelf ſo often upon this Subject?

The Reaſon moſt certainly is, becauſe *Oracles* were neither in their Ancient Reputation, nor yet were they abſolutely ruined: So, that one may well ſay, that in Compariſon of what they had formerly been, they were nothing; but yet, for all that, they continued to be ſomething ſtill.

Beſides, ſome *Oracles* were ruined for a certain time, and afterwards came into Credit again; for *Oracles* were ſubject to ſeveral Adventures and Misfortunes: And we ought not to believe them annihilated from the time of their being mute; for they might afterwards aſſume a Voice again and ſpeak.

Plutarch

Plutarch ſays, that in old time a *Dragon* came and lodg'd upon *Parnaſſus* and caus'd the *Delphick Oracle* to be deſerted, and that it was commonly believ'd, that ſolitude invited the *Dragon* to that place; but that 'twas more probable that he caus'd the ſolitude, *Greece* being fill'd with Cities, *&c.*

You ſee that *Plutarch* ſpeaks of a time very far diſtant back. So the *Oracle* had ſince its erection been once abandon'd already, and we are ſure that afterwards it was very well re-eſtabliſh'd. But after this, the *Temple* of *Delphos* underwent divers misfortunes. It was plundered by a Thief deſcended from *Phlegias*, by the Army of *Xerxes*, by the *Phocenſes*, by *Pyrrhus*, by *Nero*; and laſt of all, by the *Chriſtians* under *Conſtantine*. All this did no great good to the *Oracle*, for the *Prieſts* were either maſſacred, or diſpers'd, the place was abandon'd, the Sacred utenſils were loſt, and it muſt of neceſſity require great charges, care,

and time, to rigg out these *Oracles* again fit for holy use.

All this then may be possible, that *Cicero* in his Youth consulted the *Oracle* of *Delphos*, that during the War between *Cæsar* and *Pompey*, and in that general disorder of the Universe, the *Oracle* was mute, as *Lucan* will have it; and that after the end of this War, when *Cicero* writ his Book of Philosophy, it might begin to be re-established so much, as to make *Quintus* say it was still in the World; and yet so little, that *Cicero* might suppose that it was not in being.

When *Dorimachus*, as *Polybius* reports, had burnt the *Portico* of the *Temple* of *Dodona*, had quite destroy'd the Sacred Place of the *Oracle*, and had pillag'd, or ruin'd all the offerings, an Author of that time might very well say that the *Oracle* of *Dodona* spoke no more. But for all this, in the following age, another Author might be found transmitting to posterity some of the answers, which it gave in his time.

CHAP.

CHAP. III.

The History of the Duration of the Oracle *of* Delphos, *and ſome other* Oracles.

WE cannot better prove, that about the time of *Jeſus Chriſt*, to which the ſilence of the *Delphick Oracle* is ſo uſually referred, it did not altogether ceaſe, but was only interrupted, than by ſetting down all the different occaſions that we find it took of ſpeaking ſince.

Suetonius in the Life of *Nero* ſays that he, conſulting the *Oracle* of *Delphos*, was warn'd to have a care of ſeventy three years; and that thereupon *Nero* believ'd, he ſhould not Die till that Age, and never thought of old *Galba*, who being ſeventy three years old took his Empire from him. For he was ſo conceited of his long life and good fortune, that having loſt in a Ship-wrack things of a very

great value, he bragg'd that the fiſhes would bring 'em back to him again.

But certainly *Nero* either receiv'd from the *Oracle* of *Delphos* ſome other anſwer that ſeem'd leſs favourable to him, or was diſcontented that he was deſtin'd to live no longer than Seventy three years, or elſe he would never have took from the *Prieſts* of *Delphos* the *Cirrhæan* Fields, to give them to his Soldiers. He alſo took from the *Temple* more than five hundred Statues, ſome of Men, and, ſome of Gods, but all of Braſs; and to prophane or for ever aboliſh the *Oracle*, he caus'd ſeveral Mens Throats to be cut at the very Mouth of the Sacred Cavern, where the Divine exhalation iſſued forth.

Dion Caſſius. Pauſanias.

That the *Oracle* after ſuch an adventure as this, ſhould be mute till the Reign of *Domitian*, and, as *Juvenal* ſays, ſhould ſpeak no more, is not at all to be wonder'd at.

And yet 'tis impoſſible it could be altogether mute from the time of *Nero* to that of *Domitian*; for obſerve what *Philoſtratus* ſaies in the Life

Life of *Apollonius Tyanæus*, who came to the Court of *Domitian*: *Apollonius visited all the* Oracles *of* Greece, *that of* Dodona, *that of* Delphos, *and that of* Amphiaraus. And in another place he speaks yet farther: *You may see* Apollo *of* Delphos *made illustrious by the* Oracles *which he delivers in the midst of* Greece; *he answers those who consult him, as you know very well your self, in very few words, and without accompanying his answers with prodigies; altho it were very easie for him to make* Parnassus *tremble, to stop the course of* Cephisus, *and to change the Waters of* Castalia *into Wine; but he tells the truth plainly and does not amuse himself to make an unprofitable shew of his power.* 'Tis very pleasant that *Philostratus* should expect to have the greater value set upon this *Apollo*, because he was no great worker of Miracles. But I think there lurks in this place some secret Poïson against the *Christians*.

We formerly acquainted you, that in the time of *Plutarch*, who lived under

der *Trajan*, this *Oracle* was yet in being, but reduc'd to one ſingle *Prieſteſs*, tho' in elder times it had two or three. Under *Adrian*, *Dion Chryſoſtom* ſays, that he conſulted the *Oracle* of *Delphos*, and relates one of its anſwers, which ſeem'd to him to be very intricate, and which was ſo indeed.

Under the *Antonini*, *Lucian* ſays, that a *Prieſt* of *Tyana*, went to demand of the falſe Prophet *Alexander*, if the *Oracles* that were deliver'd then at *Didymi*, at *Claros*, and at *Delphos*, were indeed the anſwers of *Apollo*, or impoſtures. *Alexander* who had a regard for theſe *Oracles*, which were ſo like his own, anſwered the *Prieſt*, that it was a ſecret not fit for him to know. But when this wiſe *Prieſt* demanded what he ſhould be after his death, he was anſwered boldly, *Thou ſhalt be a* Camel, *then a* Horſe, *then a* Philoſopher, *and at laſt a* Prophet *as great as* Alexander.

After the *Antonini*, three Emperors diſputed the Empire, *Severus Septimus*, *Peſcennius Niger*, and *Clodi-*

us Albinus. Delphos was conſulted, ſays *Spartianus*, *to know which would be beſt for the Commonwealth*; *and the* Oracle *anſwered in Verſe*, *The Black is the beſt*, *the* African *is good*, *but the White is the worſt of all.* By the *Black* was meant *Peſcennius Niger*; by the *African*, *Severus Septimus*, who was of *Africa*; and by the *White*, *Clodius Albinus.* It was ask'd afterwards, *Who ſhould remain Maſter of the Empire*; and it was anſwer'd, *The blood of the White and the Black ſhall be ſpilt*, *and the* African *ſhall govern the World.* Then it was demanded, *how long time he ſhould govern*; and it was anſwered, *He ſhall ride on the Sea of* Italy *with twenty Ships*, *tho' with one Ship he may croſs the Sea.* By which it is meant that *Severus* ſhould reign twenty years. Here the *Oracle* reſerv'd to it ſelf an obſcure meaning, to have recourſe to in time of need. But yet in the times when *Delphos* was moſt Flouriſhing, there were never better or more ſubſtantial *Oracles* than theſe.

We

We find nevertheleſs, that *Clemens Alexandrinus*, in his Exhortations to the *Gentiles*, which he compoſed, either under *Severus*, or about that time, ſays very plainly, that the Fountain of *Caſtalia*, which belonged to the *Oracle* of *Delphos*, and that of *Colophon* and all the other Prophetick Fountains, had at laſt, tho it were late firſt, loſt their fabulous Virtues.

Perhaps in that time, theſe *Oracles* were fallen into one of thoſe Silences, to which they were ſo ſubject by Intervals: Or perhaps, becauſe they were no more in Reputation, *Clemens Alexandrinus* thought fit to ſay, they were totally ſilenced.

'Tis certain, that under *Conſtantius*, the Father of *Conſtantine*, and during the Youth of *Conſtantine*, *Delphos* was not yet ruined; ſince *Euſebius* writes in the Life of *Conſtantine*, that he ſaid, that there was then a Report, that *Apollo* had delivered an *Oracle*, not by the Mouth of a *Prieſteſs*, but from the bottom of the obſcure Cavern, which ſaid---

That

That the Juſt Men, who were upon Earth, were the Cauſe, that he could not ſpeak Truth. A very pleaſant Reaſon this! Beſides the *Oracle* of *Delphos* muſt then neceſſarily be in a very miſerable Condition, ſince it could not maintain one *Prieſteſs*.

But this *Oracle* received a terrible Blow under *Conſtantine*, who commanded, or ſuffered, that *Delphos* ſhould be pillaged. *Then*, ſays *Euſebius* in the Life of *Conſtantine*, *they produced in the open view of all the People, in the Publick Places of* Conſtantinople, *thoſe Statues, which the Errors of Men had cauſed to be ſo long Time the object of Veneration and Worſhip; here* Apollo Pythius, *there* Sminthius. *The* Tripodes *were expoſed in the* Circus *and the* Heliconian *Muſes in the Palace, to the railleries of all the World.*

But after all this, the *Oracle* of *Delphos* came into credit once again; for the Emperor **Julian* ſent to enquire of it, about the Expedition, that he was deſigning againſt the *Perſians*. If the *Oracle* of *Delphos* did

* *Theodoret.*

did continue any longer, we cannot however extend its History farther; for there is no more spoken of it in any Author. But in all likelihood, that was the very time, when it became silent, and its last Words were addressed to the Emperor *Julian*, who was so zealous for *Paganism*. I cannot therefore well understand, how some Great Men could put *Augustus* in the Place of *Julian*, and boldly affirm, that the *Oracle* of *Delphos* ended with the Answer it delivered to *Augustus*, concerning the *Hebrew Infant*. Some * Modern Authors, who thought *Oracles* worthy of a *Glorious End*, since they made so great a Noise in the World, have contrived one very fit, to give them a Reputation. They found in *Sozomenus* and *Theodoretus*, that in the time of *Julian*, the Temple of *Apollo*, which was in the Suburbs of *Antioch*, called *Daphne*, was set on Fire, no Body being able to discover the Author, or Cause of it; but the *Pagans* accused the *Christians* of this Conflagration, and the *Christians* attributed

* *Melanthon. P. Peucer. Boissard Hospin.*

buted it to Thunder and Lightning thrown by the Hand of *God*. *Theodoretus* indeed ſays, that the Lightning fell upon this Temple, but *Sozomenus* ſays nothing at all of it. Now theſe Modern Authors had a Mind to tranſplant this Accident to the Temple of *Delphos*, which was indeed far diſtant from thence. And ſo they write, that by the juſt Vengeance of *God*, it was deſtroyed by Lightning, accompanied with a mighty Earth-quake. But there is no mention made of this great trembling of the Earth, neither by *Sozomenus*, nor *Theodoret*, in their Relation of the Fire of *Daphne*; though others added it, to keep the Thunder Company, and to heighten the Prodigiouſneſs of the Accident.

But it would be a very troubleſome thing, to give you a Hiſtory of the Duration of all the *Oracles*, after the birth of *Jeſus Chriſt*. It is ſufficient to conſider in what time we find, that ſome of the principal *Ones* ſpoke their laſt. But you muſt always remember, that it is not underſtood, that

that this was the *very last* time they spoke, but that it was the last Occasion Authors had to tell us that they spoke.

Dion, who did not finish his History, till the eighth Year of *Alexander Severus*, that is, in the 230 Year of *Jesus Christ*, says, that in his time, *Amphilochus* delivered *Oracles* in Dreams: He tells us also, that there was in the City of *Apollonia* an *Oracle*, where things to come were foretold by observing the manner how the Fire took hold of the Incense, that was cast upon the Altar. But it was not permitted to ask this *Oracle* any Questions concerning Death or Marriage. These peevish *Restrictions* were sometimes founded upon the particular History of the *God*, who in his Life-time, perhaps had an Occasion given him of taking an Aversion to certain things: Though I am also of Opinion, that they might sometimes come from the ill Success, which those Answers had, that were delivered by the *Oracle*, concerning some particular Matters.

* Under

*Under *Aurelius*, towards the Year of *Christ* 272, the *Palmyrenians* being revolted, consulted the *Oracle* of *Apollo Sarpedonius* in *Cilicia*. They consulted likewise that of *Venus* of *Aphaca*; the Form of which was so very singular, that it deserves to be mentioned here. *Aphaca*, is a Place between *Heliopolis* and *Biblus*. Near the Temple of *Venus* is a Lake like a Cittern: And at certain Assemblies, that are held there at some particular Seasons, there is to be seen a Fire in the Form of a Globe of Lamps: *And this Fire*, says *Zosimus*, *has continued to be seen even in our Days*, that is to say, about the 400 Year of *Jesus Christ*. Those that offer, throw into the Lake the Present designed for the Goddess, of what sort soever they be; if she receives them, they sink to the bottom; if she receives them not, they swim on the Surface of the Water, though they be of Silver, or Gold. In the Year before the Ruin of the *Palmyrenians*, their Presents sunk to the bottom, but the Year following every thing swam on the top. *Zosimus.*

*Zoſim. *Licinius* having a Deſign, to renew his War with *Conſtantine*, conſulted the *Oracle* of *Apollo Didymæus*, and had for Anſwer two Verſes of *Homer*, of which this is the Senſe: *Unhappy old Man! It is not for thee to fight againſt Young Men; thou haſt not Strength enough left, for old Age pulls thee down.*

*Ammian. Marcellinus. * A *God*, of no great Reputation, named *Beſas*, delivered *Oracles* in Anſwer to Letters at *Abydum*, a Town in the Confines of *Thebais*, under the Empire of *Conſtantius*. For there were ſent to this Emperor certain Letters, which had been left upon the Altar, in the Temple of *Beſas*; upon which, he began to make a very rigorous Proſecution againſt thoſe who had laid thoſe Letters there; and caſt into Priſon, or ſent to Baniſhment a great Number of Perſons, or elſe cauſed them to be cruelly tormented: Becauſe by theſe Letters, they enquired after the Fate of the Empire, or concerning the Duration of the Reign of *Conſtantius*, or the Succeſs of ſome Deſigns, which

which they were framing againſt him.

In fine, *Macrobius*, who lived under *Arcadius* and *Honorius*, Sons of *Theodoſius*, ſpeaks of the *God* of *Heliopolis* in *Syria*, and of his *Oracle*, and of the Lots of *Antium*, in terms which poſitively prove that they were all remaining in his time.

But here we muſt obſerve, that it is of no abſolute neceſſity to our deſign, that all theſe Hiſtories ſhould be true, or that theſe *Oracles* did really deliver thoſe very anſwers which are attributed to 'em; for the very counterfeiting of anſwers, implies that the *Oracles* were in being when thoſe anſwers were pretended to be delivered by them: and 'tis moſt plain by the Hiſtories, which ſo many Authors have written of 'em, that they did not believe that they were wholly ſilenc'd in their days.

CHAP. IV.

That Oracles *for the most part were abolish'd at the same time with* Heathenism.

ORacles for the most part ceas'd when *Heathenism* was abolish'd, which was not immediately after the coming of *Jesus Christ*. For *Constantine* himself demolished but a few *Temples*, and he was fain to make the horrid Crimes that were perpetrated there, his pretence for pulling 'em down. On this pretext he plucked down the *Temple* of * *Venus Aphacitis*, and that of * *Æsculapius* of *Ægæ* in *Cilicia*, in both of which there were *Oracles*. But yet he * prohibited Sacrificing to the *Heathen Gods*, and by that edict began to make their *Temples* of no use. The Edicts of *Constantius* and of *Julian* (when *Constantius* had but newly declared him *Cæsar*) are still extant, wherein on pain of Death they forbid all sorts of Divi-

* Zosimus
* Eusebius.
* Theodoretus.

Divination, not only *Aſtrology*, interpretation of *Dreams* and *Magick*, but alſo foretelling by the flights of *Birds*, and by the entrails of *Beaſts*; which gave a mighty ſhock to the *Religion* of the *Romans*. And indeed the Emperors had a particular intereſt in prohibiting all kinds of fortune-telling, becauſe one or other was always inquiring about their Deſtiny, and eſpecially to know who was to be the next Succeſſor, who uſually, upon the flattery of the Diviner, made a revolt, and ſet up his own claim to the Empire.

As there were many *Oracles* remaining, when *Julian* was proclaim'd Emperor, ſo he apply'd himſelf, as much as he could, to the reſtauration of thoſe that had been deſtroyed. For example, that of the Suburbs of *Daphne* was deſtroyed by *Adrian*, * who when he was a private Man, having dipt a leaf in the *Caſtalian* Spring, (for there was one of this Name at *Daphne* as well as at *Delphos*,) found when he took it out of the Water, a Narrative of

*Soxomen.

what was to befal him, and Advice to think of obtaining the Empire. And therefore when he was afterwards made Emperor, leaſt the ſame *Oracle* ſhould give the like counſel to ſome body elſe, he caus'd the Sacred Spring to be choak'd up, by throwing a great quantity of Stones into it. There was a great deal of ingratitude in this procedure; but *Julian* * caus'd the ſpring to be opened, the Dead Bodies, which were Buried near it, to be removed, and the place to be Purified in the ſame manner as the *Athenians* had in former time purged the *Iſland* of *Delos*. But *Julian* went farther, and would needs be himſelf the Prophet of the *Didymæan Oracle*; for this he thought would be a means of bringing Prophecies into credit again, which then lay under much contempt. As he was Emperor he was (*Pontifex Maximus*, or) *Chiefeſt Prieſt*; and tho the Emperors had not been accuſtomed to make any great uſe of this *Sacerdotal dignity*; yet he was

* Ammianus Marcellinus.

was reſolved to make it more than an empty Title: And therefore we ſee that, in one of thoſe Letters of his, which are come to our view, in the quality of *Pontifex maximus* he ſuſpends a *Pagan Prieſt* for three years from the exerciſe of his Sacred function. And the Letter, which he wrote to *Arſaces*, *Pontifex* of *Galatia*, acquaints us with the way which he took to make *Paganiſm* flouriſh again: He congratulates in the firſt place his own felicity, in that his zeal had produced ſuch great effects in ſo ſhort a time; and then he declares his judgment to be, that the beſt means for the re-eſtabliſhment of *Heatheniſm* would be, to tranſplant the vertues of *Chriſtianity* into it, ſuch as Charity towards Strangers, the care of Burying the Dead decently, and that Sanctity of Life which the *Chriſtians*, as he ſays, counterfeited ſo well. He therefore commands that *Pontifex* to oblige the *Prieſts* of *Galatia*, either by arguments or threats, to live regularly, to abſtain from the publick ſhows and Tipling-houſes;

to quit all ſordid and infamous imployments, to addict themſelves, with all their Family, only to the Service of the *Gods*, and to have a watchful eye upon the *Galileans*, (ſo he ſcornfully calls the *Chriſtians*,) and to ſuppreſs their impieties and profanations. He obſerves, that it is a great ſhame, that whilſt the *Jews* and *Galileans* maintain'd not only their own poor, but ſuch as were *Heathens* too, the *Pagans* ſhould let their poor ſtarve, and not remember that Hoſpitality and Liberality are vertues ſo peculiar and proper to 'em, that *Homer* brings in *Eumæus* ſpeaking thus: *My gueſt, if a Man of quality much inferior to thine, had come hither, I muſt have entertain'd him; for all Men that are either ſtrangers or Poor come to us, as it were on an errand from* Jupiter; *and tho' I have but little to give, yet I give that little with chearfulneſs.* Laſt of all, he ſets down what diſtributions he appoints to be made each year to the Poor of *Galatia* and bids the *Pontifex* take care that there be *Hoſpitals*

Built

Built in each Town for the reception of Men of other *Religions* as well as *Heathens*. He thinks it not befitting the dignity of the *Pontifex* to make frequent visits to the Governors at their Houses, but that he rather write to 'em; nor will he have the *Priests* go meet 'em, when they come into any Town; but when they come to the *Temples*, the *Priests* may go to receive 'em as far as the *Porch*, but no farther. He also forbids the Governors on such an occasion to have their Guards Marching before them, because they are then to be considered only as private Persons; but he gives the Soldiers leave to go in after them, if they will.

With this care, and this imitation of Christianity, it is probable that *Julian* (if he had lived) would have put some stop to the ruine of his *Religion*; but it pleased God to cut him off before he had reigned two years.

Jovian, who succeded him, began to endeavour zealously the destruction of *Heathenism*; but in the seven Months

Months of his Reign it was not poſſible for him to make any great progreſs.

Valens, who had the *Eaſtern Empire*, gave liberty of conſcience to all Men to worſhip what *Gods* they liſted, and was himſelf more inclined to ſupport *Arianiſm* than *Chriſtianity*.* So that during his Reign Sacrifices were publickly made, and Men eat the fleſh of the Victims offered up to *Idols*. The *Bacchanalian* Myſteries were celebrated openly; they ran up and down with their *Thyrſi* in their hands; they tore Dogs in pieces, and committed all the other extravagances which are ſuitable to that Devotion.

*Theod. Lib. 5.

Valentinian, his Brother, who had the *Weſtern Empire*, was more zealous for the glory of *Chriſtianity*; but yet his conduct was not ſo ſteady, as it ſhould have been. He had made a law to forbid all ſorts of Nocturnal Ceremonies; whereupon *Prætextatus*, the *Proconſul* of *Greece*, repreſented to him, that if he took away from the *Greeks* thoſe Ceremonies,

cies, to which they were so mightily addicted, they would lead their Lives unpleasantly. This prevailed with *Valentinian*, and he confirmed, that notwithstanding his Law, they might keep their old Customs. It is true, that we have this account from *Zosimus* a *Pagan* Historian: and one may say, that he invented it, to make us believe that the *Pagans* were still in some credit with the Emperors; but we answer, that *Zosimus* considering the condition which his Religion was in, was more likely to have been in an humor of complaining of severities that were not acted, than of pleasing himself with the recital of a favour that was never shown. But this is certain however, that there are Old Inscriptions at *Rome*, and in other Cities of *Italy*, by which it is manifest, that under the Reign of *Valentinian*, Persons of great quality celebrated the Sacrifices called *Taurobolia* and *Criobolia*, that is to say, *The sprinkling of* Bulls *Blood and* Rams *Blood*. Nay by the great number of those Inscriptions one would be made

made to think that those Ceremonies were the principal ones in fashion, during the time of this *Valentinian*, and the two other Emperors of the same Name.

Now they being the oddest and most singular of all the *Heathen* Rites, I suppose that a description of 'em will not be irksome to the Reader. *Prudentius*, who perhaps had seen them, sets 'em down at length. There was a deep *Pit* digged, into which the person, for whom the Ceremonies were performed, descended with Sacred *Ribons* and a *Crown* upon his Head, and in a dress altogether Mysterious. Over the *Pit* they placed a Covering made of Planks pierced through with a great many Holes: Upon this Covering they brought a *Bull* adorned with a Garland of Flowers and little plates of Gold hanging upon his Horns and Forehead. Then his throat was Cut with a Sacred Knife, and his Blood dropt down through the holes that were in the Planks into the *Pit*, whilest the Person that stood there, received

ceived it with much devotion, catching it on his forehead, his Cheeks, his Arms, his ſhoulders, and every part of his Body, and being induſtrious that not one drop ſhould fall any where but on himſelf. At laſt out he came, a frightful ſpectacle, all dawb'd with blood, and his Hair, Beard and Cloaths ſtill dropping with it; but his comfort was, that his Sins were all waſh'd away, and he was regenerated to all Eternity: For, as it appears by the Inſcriptions, this Sacrifice was to thoſe who celebrated it, a Myſtical and Eternal Regeneration. But unleſs it were renewed once in twenty years, it would loſe its force, and the perpetuity of its duration. And Women, as well as Men, were capable of this Regeneration; and thoſe, who were not at the Ceremony, might receive the benefit of it by Aſſociation: Nay, which is moſt remarkable of all, whole *Cities* ſometimes performed it by Proxy or Deputation. This Sacrifice was now and then made for the Emperors health: and the *Provinces* made their

Court

Court to him by ſending ſome Perſon in their name to bedawb himſelf with *Bulls-Blood*, for the obtaining of a long and happy Life for the Emperor. All this may be prov'd out of the old Inſcriptions.

But now we come to *Theodoſius* and his Sons, who put a full Period to *Pagan* ſuperſtitions.

Theodoſius began firſt in *Egypt*, where he cauſed all the *Temples* to be ſhut up: At laſt he went ſo far as to demoliſh the *Temple* of *Serapis*, which was the moſt famous of 'em all. And as *Strabo* informs us, there was nothing more Glorious in the whole *Heathen Religion* than the *Pilgrimages* which were made to *Serapis*. *When the time*, ſays he, *of certain* Feſtivals *was near at hand, it is hard to believe what a multitude of People went down the River from* Alexandria *to* Canopus, *where this* Temple *ſtood. Day and Night there was nothing to be ſeen, but Boats full of Men and Women, Singing and Dancing with all the liberty imaginable. At* Canopus *there*

were

were a vaſt number of Inns *on the River ſide, which were of uſe for the entertainment of the Paſſingers and accommodating them in their divertiſements.* And therefore the Sophiſter *Eunapius*, who was a *Pagan*, ſeems to have had a mighty concern for the *Temple* of *Serapis*, and with Gall enough he deſcribes its deſtruction. Men (*ſays he*) that had never heard the ſound War, ſhow'd themſelves mighty Valiant againſt the Stones of this *Temple*, but eſpecially againſt the rich Offerings, which it was full of: And in thoſe Holy Places they put *Monks*, a People (*ſays he*) infamous and uſeleſs; who, becauſe they wear a black and ſlovenly Habit, arrogate to themſelves a Tyrannical Authority over the minds of Men; and inſtead of thoſe *Gods* which the light of our natural Reaſon diſcovers to us, they ſet up for objects of our Adoration, the heads of Malefactors who were executed for their Crimes, which they ſalt to preſerve 'em from Corruption. Thus does this impious wretch treat *Monks* and Relicks; and certainly

certainly the Liberty of those times was very great, when such Invectives were written against the *Emperors Religion*. *Ruffinus* informs us, that the Temple of *Serapis* was found to be full of secret Passages, and Machines contrived for the Impostures of the Priests. He tells us, amongst other things, that on the East side of the Temple there was a little Window, through which, on a certain day of the Year, the Sun Beams entring, fell just upon the Mouth of *Serapis*: At the same time, an Image of the *Sun* made of Iron was brought in, which being attracted by a great Loadstone fixed in the Cieling, ascended up to the Image of *Serapis*. Then they cried out, that the *Sun* saluted their *God*: But when the Iron Image fell down again, and the Sun-Beams went off from *Serapis*'s Mouth, they said, that the *Sun*, having finished his Complement, was retired, to go about his own Affairs.

After that *Theodosius* had defeated the Rebel *Eugenius*, he went to *Rome*, where

where ſtill the whole *Senate* ſtood up for *Paganiſm*. Their chiefeſt Reaſon was, becauſe, for twelve hundred Years, *Rome* had thriven well enough with its Gods, from whom it had received all ſorts of Proſperity. The *Emperor* made a Speech in the *Senate-Houſe*, perſwading them to embrace the *Chriſtian Religion*; but they replied, that by Cuſtom and Experience, they had found *Paganiſm* to be a good and convenient *Religion*; and if they ſhould change it for that of the Chriſtians, they could not foreſee what might be the Event. Was not this fine *Theology*, for the *Roman-Senate*? *Theodoſius* finding, that this was not the way to deal with them, told them, that the publick Treaſury was too much exhauſted by making chargeable Sacrifices, and that he had Occaſion to imploy that Money in paying his Armies. They replied, that their Sacrifices would not be acceptable, unleſs they were made at the Charge of the Publick. But that inconvenience was no Argument with *him*:

So he put an end to all Sacrifices and old Ceremonies. And *Zosimus* does not let slip the Occasion of observing, that from that time forwards all sorts of Misfortunes happened to the *Roman Empire*.

The same Author tells us, that when *Theodosius* made that Voyage to *Rome*, *Serena*, the Wife of *Stilicon*, entred into the Temple of the *Mother of the Gods*, to put some Affront upon her, and that she made bold to convert to her own use a fair Neck-lace, which the *Goddess* wore: This an old *Vestal* Virgin reproved her very sharply for, and, as she went out of the Temple, followed her, cursing her with a thousand Imprecations. After which, says *Zosimus*, the poor *Serena* was often frighted (both waking and sleeping) with a certain Apparition, that threatned her with sudden Death.

But the last Efforts of *Paganism* were those made by *Symmachus*, to obtain of the Emperors, *Valentinian*, *Theodosius*, and *Arcadius*, the Re-establishment of the Privileges of the *Vestals*,

Vestals, and of the Altar of *Victory* in the *Capitol*; but all the World knows with what Vigour St. *Ambrose* opposed him. Yet it appears by the very Proceedings in that Contention, that *Rome* did in those days retain a strong Tincture of *Paganism*. For St. *Ambrose* asks *Symmachus*, why the *Pagans* are not contented with having the Publick Places, Portico's and Baths filled with their *Idols*, and if nothing will serve their turns, unless the Altar of *Victory* be set up in the very *Capitol*, which is the Place of the whole City, whither most Christians resort; *that the Christians*, says he, *may, whether they will or no, have the Smoak of the Sacrifices blown in their Eyes, the Musick in their Ears, the Ashes in their Throats, and the Incense in their Noses.*

Nay, even when *Rome* was besieged by *Alaricus*, in the Reign of *Honorius*, it was still full of *Idols*. *Zosimus* complains, that all things conspiring to the Ruin of that unhappy *City*, the *Gods* were not only robbed of their Ornaments, but even

ſome of thoſe that were of Gold or Silver were themſelves melted down; of which Number was the Goddeſs of *Fortitude*, which from that time forward wholly abandoned the *Romans*. Though this be a lucky hit, yet *Zoſimus* will never make it paſs upon us for the true cauſe of the taking of that City.

I am in ſome ſuſpence, whether upon the Credit of this Author, we may admit the following Story to be true. *Honorius* forbad all Perſons that were not of the Chriſtian Religion, to appear at *Court*, with a Shoulder-belt, or to have any Military Command. *Generidus*, a *Pagan* and *Barbarian* too, but a Man of great Courage, who commanded the Troops that lay in *Dalmatia* and *Pannonia*, came no more into the Emperor's Preſence, laid aſide his Shoulder-belt, and forbore to exerciſe his Charge. *Honorius* one day asked him, how it came to paſs, that he came not to *Court* in his Turn, as it was his Duty to do? To which he replied, That there was a Law made, that

that dispossessed him of his Belt, and his Command. The *Emperor* told him, that Law was not for such Men as he was; but he answered, that he could not take the Benefit of any Distinction that separated him from those who professed the same Worship with himself. In effect, he would not undertake to act again in his Command, till the Emperor himself, compelled to it by Necessity, repealed that Law. If this Story be true, then we may easily judge that *Honorius* contributed very little to the down-fall of the *Heathen* Religion.

But at last all Exercise of that Religion was prohibited on Pain of Death, by an Edict of the Emperors *Valentinian the Third*, and *Martian*, in the Year of Christ 451. and this was the last Blow given to that Superstition. And yet we find, that those very Emperors, who were so zealous for the Advancement of Christianity, did, for all that, themselves retain some Relicks of *Heathenism*, which served to augment their Au-

thority. As for Example, they ſtill took upon them the Title of *Pontifex Maximus*, that is to ſay, *Chief Patriarch* (as it were) of thoſe who divined by the Flights of *Birds*, and the Entrails of *Beaſts*, and of all the Colleges of *Fagan Prieſts*, and Supreme Head of all the ancient Romiſh Idolatry.

Zoſimus pretends that *Conſtantine* the Great, *Valentinian* and *Valens* willingly accepted from the *Heathen* Prieſts both the Title and Habit of that Dignity, which according to Cuſtom was preſented to them at their Acceſſion to the Empire; but that *Gratian* refuſed the Pontifical Office; which being related to the Prieſts, the principal amongſt them replied in a great heat: *Si princeps non vult appellari Pontifex, admodum brevi Pontifex Maximus fiet.* The Sharpneſs of which ſaying lies wholly in the Latin words, and it was grounded on the Revolt of *Maximus* againſt *Gratian* at that time, with a Deſign to ſtrip him of the Empire.

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But the old *Inscriptions* still remaining, are a Testimony of this matter, more to be credited than *Zosimus*. There we see the Title of *Pontifex Maximus* given to the *Christian Emperors*, even in the sixth Century. Two hundred years after Christianity had ascended the Throne, the *Emperor *Justin* amongst his other Titles assumes that of *Pontifex Maximus* in an *Inscription*, which he had caused to be made for the City of *Justinopolis* in *Istria*, which was called by his *Name*. *Grute-rus.

To be one of the *Gods* of a false Religion was surely much worse than to be the *Pontifex Maximus* of it. Now the *Heathens* erected the *Roman Emperors* into *Gods*: And well they might, seeing they made the City of *Rome* a *Goddess*. The Emperors, *Theodosius* and *Arcadius*, tho' they were *Christians*, permitted *Symmachus*, that great Defender of the *Heathen Religion*, to give them the Title of (*Vestra Divinitas*, or) *Your Divinity*: Which could be only

taken in the Sence, and according to the Custom, of the *Pagans*. And in some Inscriptions, which were set up in Honour of *Arcadius* and *Honorius*, these following Words are to be found; *Devotus Numini Majestatiq; eorum*, that is, *Devoted to their Divinity and Majesty.*

But the Christian Emperors went farther than the bare receiving of those Titles; for they gave them to themselves: As appears by the Constitutions (or Laws) of *Theodosius*, *Valentinian*, *Honorius* and *Arcadius*; wherein they sometimes call their Edicts, *Heavenly Statutes*, and *Divine Oracles*: And sometimes they say expresly, *The most happy Expedition of our Divinity*, &c.

It may be said, that this was nothing but the *Stile* of the Court of Chancery; but it was certainly an unjustifiable and ridiculous *Stile* under the *Heathen* Religion its self, and a blasphemous one under the *Christian*. And therefore it is very wonderful, that such like Extravagancies should become so familiar and common

mon a way of ſpeaking, that they were in every Bodies Mouth.

The Truth is, that *Flattery*, which Subjects are ſo apt to beſtow upon their Sovereigns, and the natural *Fondneſs* which *Princes* have for *Praiſe*, made the Cuſtom of uſing theſe *Expreſſions*, laſt longer than it ought to have done. I confeſs that the *Flattery* and the *Fondneſs* in this Caſe were each of them very extraordinary in its kind: And it is no wonder, ſince they are things uncapable of being limited to any bounds. That a Man ſhould be in earneſt when he gives another *Man* the Title of a *God* is hard to conceive, and yet the frequency takes off the Wonder; but that this Man ſhould accept the Title, and that with ſo much eaſineſs, as by Degrees to come to the giving of it to himſelf (and all this while have a right Notion of what is truly called God,) This, I ſay, is a thing that I know not how to give ſuch an Account of, as will ſave the Honour of Humane Nature.

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As for the Title of *Pontifex Maximus*, I do not see what was in it, that could flatter the Vanity of the Christian Emperors into the making it so much their Interest to conserve it: But, perhaps, they thought that it was of some use for the imprinting of a respectful Awe in the Minds of those that were still of the *Heathen* Religion: Or, it may be, they pleased themselves with the *Supremacy* over Christians, which under the Ambiguity of that Title they assumed to themselves. In effect, upon certain Occasions they were *Magisterial* enough in their use of it: And some Authors would perswade us, that the *Emperors* quitted their Pretensions to this Title, out of Respect to the *Pope*; who, it seems, began to be apprehensive that they might make ill uses of it.

But it is not so surprizing by far, to see these *Heathen* remains continue for some time in the Christian Religion, as to see what was most barbarous, extravagant, and directly opposite to Reason and the common Interest

tereſt of Mankind, keep ſuch firm footing, as to be the laſt that left the Field of all the *Pagan* Superſtitions, I mean, *Humane Sacrifices*. That Religion was certainly very fantaſtical and full of Variety; for it conſiſted of ſome things extremely frolick, and others no leſs mournful. In one Place, the *Ladies* go to the Temples in a fit of Devotion, to offer their Favours to the firſt Comer: And in another place, the ſame Devotion cauſes the throats of *Men* to be cut upon an Altar. Theſe deteſtable Sacrifices were practiſed by all Nations: The *Grecians* celebrated them, as well as the *Scythians*, though not ſo often; and the *Romans* (for all that they obliged the *Carthaginians*, in a Treaty of Peace concluded between them, not to ſacrifice their Children to *Saturn*, according to the Cuſtom derived from their Anceſtors, the *Phœnicians*, yet) did themſelves every Year offer up a Man to *Jupiter Latialis*. *Euſebius* cites *Porphyrius* for this, as a thing ſtill in uſage in his Days. *Lactantius* and *Prudentius*, the one

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in the beginning, and the other in the end of the fourth Age, are Evidences of the same thing, each of them for his own Time. These *Ceremonies*, that were so full of Horrour, lasted as long as the Superstition of *Oracles*, which was only lyable to the Reproach of Stupidity and fond Credulity.

CHAP.

CHAP. V.

That if Heatheniſm *had not been aboliſh'd, yet* Oracles *would have ceaſed; and the firſt particular Reaſon hereof.*

THE down-fall of *Heatheniſm*, when *Chriſtianity* triumphed over it, could do no leſs than involve *Oracles* in the common ruine with its ſelf. But it may be farther aſſerted that *Chriſtianity*, even before it became the reigning *Religion*, was an irreſiſtible enemy to *Oracles*; for the *Chriſtians* made it their buſineſs to diſabuſe mankind, and diſcover impoſtures. And yet if the *Chriſtian Religion* had never been, *Oracles* would for other reaſons have loſt their credit by degrees, and at laſt have quite fail'd.

It was obſerv'd that they began to degenerate from the very time when

when they left off giving their answers in Verse. *Plutarch* has written a tract expressly to enquire about the reason of this Change, wherein (according to the fashion of *Greek* Authors) he sets down all that could be said on this subject, either true or false. First he saies, that the *God* who inspires the *Pythian Priestess* proportions himself to her Capacity, and does not answer in Verse by her, unless she have a natural faculty that way; for the prediction only belongs to *Apollo*, but the manner of Expression to the *Priestess*. Thus, it is not the fault of the *Musician*, if he cannot make as good melody with a *Cittern* as with a *Lute*; for the property of the Instrument must be considered. Suppose, it had been the custom for the *Oracle* to deliver its answers in writing, could we reasonably deny that *Apollo* inspired 'em, unless the *Priestess* wrote 'em in a fair hand. The Soul of the *Prophetess*, when united to *Apollo*, is like an innocent *Maid* when she is first Married, who is ignorant both of

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the pleaſure and the duty of her new condition.

But why then did the Ancient *Prieſteſſes* always anſwer in Verſe? Were not they as pure and Virgin Souls, contracted to *Apollo?* To this *Plutarch* replies firſt of all, That even the Ancient *Prieſteſſes* did now and then ſpeak in Proſe. And beſides this, in Old times all People were born *Poets*: ſo that, as he tells us, they had no ſooner drank a little freely, but they made Verſes; they had no ſooner caſt their eyes on a Handſom Woman, but they were all Poeſy, and their very common diſcourſe fell naturally into Feet and Rhime: So that their *Feaſts* and their *Courtſhips* were the moſt delectable things in the World. But now this Poetick *Genius* has deſerted Mankind: and tho' our paſſions be as ardent as thoſe of our Anceſtors, and we talk as much as they did, yet Love at preſent creeps in humble proſe. And even all the *Socrates's* and *Plato's*, who diſcourſed ſo much concerning that agreeable paſſion, had

had not the leaſt skill in *Poetry*.

Now all this has too much fancy and too little truth in it, to deſerve a ſerious anſwer. But *Plutarch* gives us another reaſon, which has ſomething more of probability; which is this; that the Ancients wrote alwaies in Verſe, whether they treated of *Religion*, *Morality*, *Natural Philoſophy* or *Aſtrology*. *Orpheus* and *Heſiod*, whom every body acknowledges for *Poets*, were *Philoſophers* alſo: and *Parmenides*, *Xenophanes*, *Empedocles*, *Eudoxus*, and *Thales*, whom all Men own for *Philoſophers*, were *Poets* too. It is very ſtrange indeed that *Poetry* ſhould be elder Brother to *Proſe*, and that Men did not at firſt light upon the moſt natural and eaſie way of expreſſing their thoughts; but it is very probable, that ſince all their writings were as ſo many precepts, they were ſhap'd into meaſured lines, that they might be the more eaſily remembred: and therefore all their Laws and their rules of Morality were in Verſe. By this we may ſee that Poetry had a much

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more serious beginning than is usually imagin'd, and that the Muses have of late days mightily deviated from their original Gravity. Who would imagine that the *Old Statutes* should by right have been written in Metre, and *Chaucer's Tales* in Prose? There was a necessity therefore, *saies Plutarch*, that Ancient *Oracles* should be deliver'd in Verses, since all matters of importance were so; for *Apollo* was then willing to follow the mode of those times, and when Prose came afterwards to be in use, he was for being in the fashion still.

I am of the same opinion my self, and believe that *Oracles* at first gave their answers in Verse, both that they might be more easily remembred, and to comply with the custom which had condemned Prose to be used only in trival discourses. But History and Philosophy began to shake off those useless Chains about the Reign of *Cyrus*. For *Thales*, who lived at that time, was one of the last Poetick *Philosophers*; but *Apollo* continued

nued to ſpeak in Verſe till about *Pyrrhus*'s daies, as *Cicero* informs us, which was about two hundred and thirty years after *Cyrus*. Whence it appears, that *Poetry* being found ſuitable to the dignity of *Oracles*, it was retain'd in uſe at *Delphos*, as long as it was poſſible; till at laſt plain Proſe getting the victory baniſh'd it quite from thence.

Plutarch could hardly be in earneſt, when he ſaid, that *Oracles* were therefore at laſt pronounced in *Proſe*, becauſe People began to require clearer anſwers, and to be weary of the Myſterious bombaſt of *Verſes*. For whether it were the *Gods* or but the *Prieſts* that ſpoke, I would fain know how Men durſt accuſe 'em of obſcurity.

But he has more probability on his ſide, when he pretends, that prophetick verſifying fell into contempt, by being in uſe amongſt thoſe *Fortune-tellers*, who ſtroling about the High-ways, were conſulted by the Rabble: Now, the *Prieſts* who belonged to the *Temples*, ſcorn'd to uſe

uſe the ſame Cuſtoms in common with theſe *Gypſies*; for they thought themſelves to be a nobler and graver ſort of *Fortune-tellers*; which makes a mighty difference, I'll aſſure you, in this great affair.

But *Plutarch* reſerves his true reaſon till laſt: which is, that in former times Men went to conſult at *Delphos* only about matters of the higheſt conſequence; as *Wars*, Building of *Cities*, intereſt of *Kings* and *Commonwealths*; whereas now adays, *ſaies he*, every ordinary Perſon runs thither to ask the *Oracle*, If they ſhall Marry, If they ſhall buy a ſlave, If they ſhall thrive by their Trade; and when a *City* ſends thither, 'tis only to enquire, whether their Lands will yield a good Crop, or their Cattle increaſe. Theſe queſtions deſerve not the trouble of an anſwer in Verſe, for if *Apollo* ſhould take that pains, he would be like thoſe Sophiſters, who labour mightily to ſhow their learning, when there is no proper occaſion for it.

But now I come to that which

was the most effectual cause of the ruine of *Oracles*. The *Romans* made themselves Masters of all *Greece*, and those Kingdoms founded by *Alexander*'s Successors: and assoon as the *Grecians* had submitted to the *Roman* Yoke, from which they had no hopes of being ever free, they were no longer agitated with the continual divisions and quarrels which had wont to haras those petty *States*, whose interests were so mightily embroiled; for their common Masters made 'em all quiet, and peace was the product of their slavery. And I think, the *Greeks* had never happy days till then; for they lived in a profound tranquility, and in perfect ease; they passed their time in their places of exercise, in their *Theaters*, and in their Schools of *Philosophy*. They had publick sports, Comedies, Disputations and Harangues; and for Men of their *Genius*, what could be desired more? But all this afforded little business for *Oracles*, and there was very seldom any occasion to importune the *Delphian God*.

And

And it is very easie to imagine, that the *Priests* would not give themselves the trouble of answering in Verse, when they found their trade fell off, and the profit of it was not worth the while.

And as the *Romans* did the *Oracles some* prejudice by the peace which they established in *Greece*, so they did them *more* by the slight esteem which they had of 'em themselves: for their folly did not lie that way; they addicted themselves only to the Books of the *Sibylls* and to the *Tuscan Divinations*, which were performed by the observations of the flights of *Birds* and the entrails of Sacrificed *Beasts*. Now the maximes and opinions of the Victors, easily obtain amongst the Conquered; and therefore it is no wonder that *Oracles*, being a *Greek* invention, should follow the fate of *Greece*; and that as with her they flourish'd in prosperity, so with her they lost their Ancient Glory.

But for all this, we must acknowledge, that there were some *Oracles*

in *Italy*. *Tiberius*, as *Suetonius* says, went to the *Oracle* of *Geryon* near *Padua*; where there was a certain Spring, if we will believe *Claudian*, which restored speech to the Dumb and healed all sorts of Diseases. *Suetonius* saies further, that *Tiberius* had once a mind to destroy all the *Oracles* that were near *Rome*; but he was prevented by the miracle of the *Prænestine* Lots, which, when they were brought up to *Rome* in a Box well lock'd and seal'd, were not to be found there; but when the Box was carried back to *Prænestе*, then they were found in it again.

To these Lots of *Prænestе* and those of *Antium*, we must add the Lots of the * *Temple* of *Hercules* which was at *Tibur*.

*Statius.

Pliny the Younger thus describes the *Oracle* of *Clitumnus* the *God* of a certain River in *Umbria*: *The* Temple *is Ancient and much revered; in it stands* Clitumnus *in a* Roman *habit, and his Lots manifest his Presence and the power of his Divinity. Round about it, there are several little* Chapels,

pels, *in some of which there are fountains and Springs: for* Clitumnus *is, as it were, the father of many other little Rivers which join with its Streams. There is a Bridge which separates the Sacred part of these Waters from the prophane. Above this Bridge Men may only go in Boats; but below it they may bathe themselves in the River.* This is the only River of my acquaintance that was *Oracular*, for they had other business to do than to turn *Fortune-tellers.*

But there were *Oracles* at *Rome* it self. Had not *Æsculapius* one in his *Temple* which stood in an *Island* in the River *Tiburi* There has been found at *Rome* a piece of a Marble Table, wherein the Miracles of *Æsculapius* are engraven in *Greek.* One of the most considerable of which, is this that follows, translated word for word from the Inscription. *At the same time the* Oracle *made this answer to a Blind Man Named* Caius. *He was bid go to the Sacred Altar, and kneel down and Worship there; then to go from the Right side to the*

Left, and lay his five fingers upon the Altar, *and afterwards clap his hand upon his Eyes. After all this was done, the Blind Man was restored to his Sight, as all the People were Witnesses, and testifyed the joy which they received in seeing such mighty wonders wrought in the Reign of our Emperor* Antoninus. The two other Cures are less miraculous; for one was of a *Pleurisie* and the other of a *loss of Blood*; (both of 'em very desperate Diseases without doubt,) but the *God* prescribed to the Sick Persons some *Pine Apples and Honey with Wine and certain Ashes*; which were things that those Men who are something incredulous, will be apt to say are meerly natural remedies.

These Inscriptions, for all that they are in *Greek*, were certainly done at *Rome*; for the form of the Letters and the spelling, do not at all seem to be from the hand of some *Grecian Sculptor*. Besides, tho' it be true, that the *Romans* made their Inscriptions in *Latin*, yet they made some few in *Greek*, especially when they had some

ſome particular reaſon for it. Now it is very probable, that no other language but *Greek* was uſed in the *Temple* of *Æſculapius*, becauſe he was originally a *Grecian God*, and brought to *Rome* in that great plague, of which every one knows the Story.

Thus we ſee that the *Oracle* of *Æſculapius* was not of a *Roman* inſtitution: and I doubt not, but that if it were an enquiry worth the while, moſt of the *Italian Oracles* would be found to be of a *Greek* Original.

However it be, the ſmalneſs of the number of the *Italian Oracles*, and even of thoſe that were at *Rome* it ſelf, makes but a very inconſiderable exception to the generality of the notion which we propoſe. *Æſculapius* dealt only in Phyſick, and concerned not himſelf in matters of Government: and tho' he had a rare knack at making Blind Men ſee, yet I believe the *Senate* would have been loth to have depended upon his advice in a caſe even of the ſmalleſt importance.

Private

Private persons amongst the *Romans* might give what credit they listed to *Oracles*; but the *State* had little faith in them. Thus the *Sibylls* Books and the entrails of Beasts governed all. And so a vast number of *Gods* fell into contempt, when People took notice that the Masters of the World would not vouchsafe to consult 'em.

CHAP. VI.

The second particular cause of the Cessation of Oracles.

BUT I meet with a difficulty in this business, that I will not conceal. For if about the time of *Pyrrhus*, *Apollo* was reduced to Prose, this implies that *Oracles* began then to grow into discredit, and yet the *Romans* were not masters of *Greece* till a long time after *Pyrrhus*; and between the Reign of *Pyrrhus* and the *Romans* conquest of *Greece*, there were as many Wars and Commotions

ons in that Country as ever, and by consequence as many important subjects to consult the *God* of *Delphos* about.

This indeed is true; but we must also observe that about the time of *Alexander* the Great, a little before *Pyrrhus*'s days, there appear'd in *Greece* certain great Sects of *Philosophers*, such as the *Peripateticks* and *Epicureans*, who made a mock of *Oracles*. The *Epicureans* especially made sport with the paltry Poetry that came from *Delphos*. For the *Priests* hammered out their Verses as well as they could, and they oftentimes committed faults against the common Rules of *Prosodia*. Now those Fleering *Philosophers* were mightily concerned that *Apollo*, the *very God of Poetry*, should come so far behind *Homer*, who was but a meer mortal, and was beholding to the same *Apollo* for his inspirations.

It was to little purpose to excuse the matter, by saying, that the badness of the Verses was a kind of Testimony

ſtimony that they were made by a *God*, who nobly ſcorn'd to be tyed up to rules and to be confined to the *Beauty of a Style*. For this made no impreſſion upon the *Philoſophers*; who, to turn this anſwer into ridicule, compared it to the Story of a Painter, who being hired to draw the Picture of a *Horſe* tumbling on his Back upon the ground, drew one running full ſpeed: and when he was told, that this was not ſuch a Picture as was beſpoke, he turned it upſide down, and then ask'd if the *Horſe* did not tumble upon his back now. Thus theſe *Philoſophers* jeered ſuch Perſons, who by a way of arguing that would ſerve both ways, could equally prove that the Verſes were made by a *God*, whether they were good or bad.

So that at length the *Prieſts* of *Delphos* being quite baffled with the railleries of thoſe learned Wits, renounced all Verſes, at leaſt as to the ſpeaking them from the *Tripos*; for there were ſtill ſome *Poets* maintain'd in the *Temple*, who at leiſure

turned

turned into Verſe, what the Divine fury had inſpired the *Pythian Prieſteſs* withal in Proſe. It was very pretty, that Men could not be contented to take the *Oracle* juſt as it came piping hot from the Mouth of their *God*. But perhaps, when they had come a great way for it, they thought it would look ſilly to carry home an *Oracle* in Proſe.

Nay the *Gods*, being willing to keep up the uſe of Verſes as long as ever they could, did now and then ſtoop to borrow a line or two out of *Homer*; whoſe Poetry, it ſeems, was better than their own. Of this there are abundance of Examples; but, both this borrowing of Verſes, and keeping *Poets* at ſtanding wages in their *Temples*, may well paſs for good arguments that the old natural *Poetry* of *Oracles* had mightily loſt its reputation.

But theſe great Sects of *Philoſophers*, enemies to *Oracles*, muſt needs have done them a more eſſential prejudice than the bare reducing them

to

to Prose. For questionless they opened the eyes of a great many rational persons, and even amongst the populace they made the infallibility of those things lie under more suspicion than it had done before. For when *Oracles* first crept out into the World, *Philosophy* had not yet appear'd.

CHAP.

CHAP. VII.

The last particular causes of the Cessation of Oracles.

THE cheats of *Oracles* were so gross, that at last they were discovered by a thousand several accidents. I suppose that *Oracles* were at first entertained with greediness and joy, because that nothing could be more convenient than to have *Gods* always ready at hand to answer every question that might be suggested by uneasiness or curiosity: and I fansie that it was with a great deal of reluctancy that People parted with this supposed convenieney; and that *Oracles* would never have come to an end as long as *Heathenism* lasted, if they had not been the most impertinent things in the World. But at last Men were forced to yield to their own experiences and suffer themselves to be disabused.

To

To this the Priests gave no small help by the extreme Impudence, which they used in the Exercise of their false Ministry; for they thought that things were brought to such a Point, that there was no occasion for any Circumspection.

I say nothing of the Waggishness of the *Oracles*, which they sometimes delivered: For Example, *To a Man that came to ask of the Deity, *What he should do to grow rich*, he answered very pleasantly, *That he need do no more than get all the Land between* Sycione *and* Corinth. And sometimes the *Consulter* would make free with the *God*. *Polemon*, sleeping in the Temple of *Æsculapius*, to learn of him how to cure his Gout, the *God* appeared to him and told him: *That he must abstain from cold Drink*. Polemon *replied*, *you would be puzled then, my good Friend, if you were consulted about an Ox?* But these were but the gayeties and frolicks of the Priests, who would sometimes both give and take a Jest.

* *Athenæus.*

But it was still more remarkable, that

that the Gods never failed to fall in Love with the *fair Ladies*; for they must come and pass away the Nights in their Temples, tricked up for the purpose by their own Husbands, and furnished with Presents to make the *God* amends for his pains. 'Tis not to be doubted, but that the Doors of the Temple were shut up in the sight of the whole World, but who could secure the Husbands against the Passages under Ground.

For my Part, I do not question, but such Intrigues were often practised. And *Herodotus* writes, that in the eighth and uppermost Story of that lofty Tower belonging to the Temple of *Belus* in *Babylon*, there was a Magnificent Bed, where there lay every Night a pretty Woman selected by the *God*. The like was done at *Thebes* in *Egypt*: And when the Priestess of the Oracle of *Patara* in *Lycia* was to propheſie, she must first take a Nights Lodging all alone in the Temple, whither *Apollo* came (forsooth) *to inspire her*.

All these things were practised du-

ring the darkest Mists of *Paganism*, and in times when *Heathen* Ceremonies were not to be contradicted; but in the view of the very Christians themselves *Saturn* of *Alexandria* had such Women brought in the Night to his Temple, as he thought fit to chuse by the Mouth of his Priest *Tyrannus*. Many Women had received this Honour with a great deal of devout Respect, and none of them made any Complaints of *Saturn*, though he was the *Oldest* and the least a *Gallant* of all the Gods. But at last there was one, who having had her Nights lodging in the Temple, considered with her self, that nothing had passed there, but what mortal Man was capable of performing; and *Tyrannus* could have done himself: And so she acquainted her Husband with her Suspicion, who hereupon accused *Tyrannus*. The unhappy *Priest* confessed all; and the Lord knows what a scandal this gave to the Inhabitants of *Alexandria*.

Thus the Wickedness of the *Priests*, their Insolence, and several Chances

Chances that had discovered their Cheats, and the Obscurity, Uncertainty and Falseness of their Answers would at last have quite ruined the Reputation of *Oracles*, and entirely abolished them, even if *Heathenism* had not been come to a Period. But the thing became more unavoidable by the Addition of other Foreign Reasons: Such as first the Raillery of the *Grecian* Philosophers, then the little use the *Romans* had always of them, and last of all the *Christians* utter detestation of them, and putting a full end to them and *Paganism* together.

FINIS.

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